Alberta's

Parks & Protected Areas

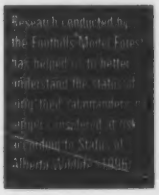
...it's in our nature!

Who Cares For All Creatures, Great And Small?

We do. Species such as the long-toed salamander, pileated woodpecker, northern goshawk, barred owl and bull trout play important roles in the food chain and overall biodiversity of our forest areas. In sustaining these natural ecological systems we are able to ensure the health of our planet for future generations to enjoy.

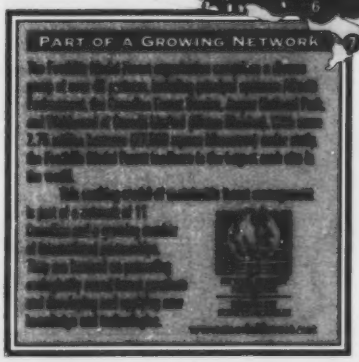
PHOTO COURTESY OF KAREN GRAHAM

Through extensive fish and wildlife studies, the Foothills Model Forest is building a strong foundation of knowledge which will help address sustainable forest management issues over a large and diverse landbase. The continued survival of these species and all forest wildlife is an important social, ecological and economic concern for all Albertans. The Foothills Model Forest and its partners are conducting important research into the ecological, economic and social values of our forests, to develop information and tools for use by land and resource managers to ensure the long-term health of our communities and forests.



"Ecosystem diversity is crucial for maintaining wildlife diversity. Information from studies that examine wildlife and their habitats are currently being used by foresters and biologists to help ensure ecosystems will be present for all species."

KAREN GRAHAM
BIOLOGIST



If you would like more information on the Foothills Model Forest or the long-term biodiversity monitoring being undertaken, please tour our Website at **www.fmf.ab.ca** or call (780) 865-8329.

foothills
model *forest*
a growing understanding

Ask about our Educational Programs and Forest Discovery Tours.

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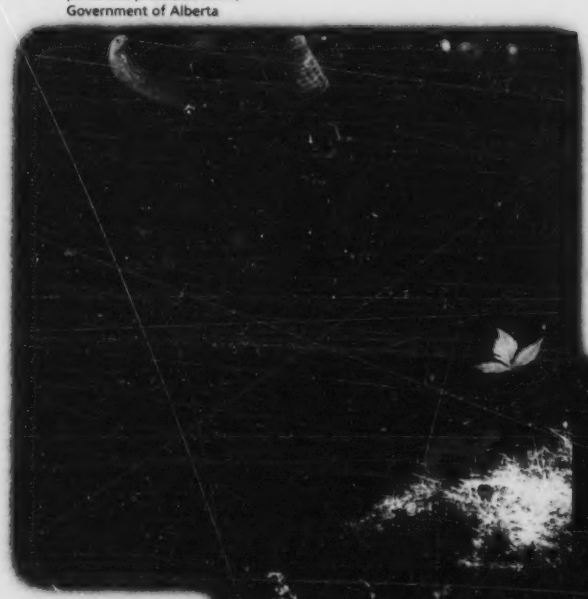
It's in Our Nature!

Come and visit our vast forests, pristine lakes, wide open prairies and magnificent Rocky Mountains. You can experience any and all of these places when you visit Alberta's provincial parks, recreation areas, natural areas, wilderness areas and ecological reserves.

This guide is your companion for exploring Alberta's natural spaces. Browse these pages to find a new place to visit or an old friend. Flip to the map and facility guide to find out details about distances, services, camping and other facilities. Then pack your vehicle and set off for unforgettable vistas, peaceful campsites and experiences you'll savour long after you return home.

Nature appreciation in Alberta's parks and protected areas; Government of Alberta



Rock climbing in Kananaskis Country; Government of Alberta

Network

What is Alberta's Parks and Protected Areas Network?

In the Beginning....

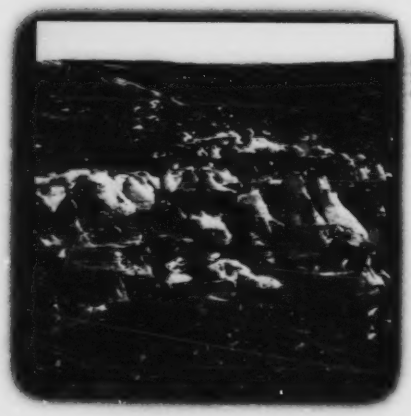
The roots of Alberta's parks and protected areas date back to 1930 when the first Provincial Parks Act was legislated. Early parks were small recreation facilities that provided Albertans with scenic spots to swim and picnic. Later, several other government agencies built camping and recreation facilities. Eventually, as the role of the departments of Transportation, Environment and Forestry changed, many of their sites were incorporated into the parks and protected areas network.

Alberta's parks and protected areas protect important landscapes and preserve our natural, historical and cultural heritage. The network includes a spectrum of lands from purely recreational sites to pure wilderness. Within this network are the lofty peaks of Kananaskis Country and the White Goat Wilderness Area, the cool forests of Notikewin Provincial Park, the waving grasslands of Kennedy Coulee Ecological Reserve, the rugged foothills of William A. Switzer Provincial Park and the ghostly hoodoos and ancient rock art of Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park. These and other areas are set aside to protect the plants and animals that live there, and to provide opportunities for heritage appreciation, tourism and outdoor recreation. They are special places where Albertans and visitors from the four corners of the world can enjoy our natural, historical and cultural heritage.

Canoeing at William A. Switzer Provincial Park; D. Dodge

A scientist surveys for leopard frogs in Kennedy Coulee Ecological Reserve; Cleve Wershler

Mountain meadow in Kananaskis Country; D. Traweek



Hoodoos at Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park; Government of Alberta

Protected Areas Today

The changes in departmental objectives as well as public attitudes and expectations have driven the evolution of the parks and protected areas network. It now includes lands from small day use areas just barely over 1 ha in size, to wild and rugged mountain wilderness sites as large as 450,000 ha. Each year, over 8 million people visit our parks and protected areas, mostly on day trips.

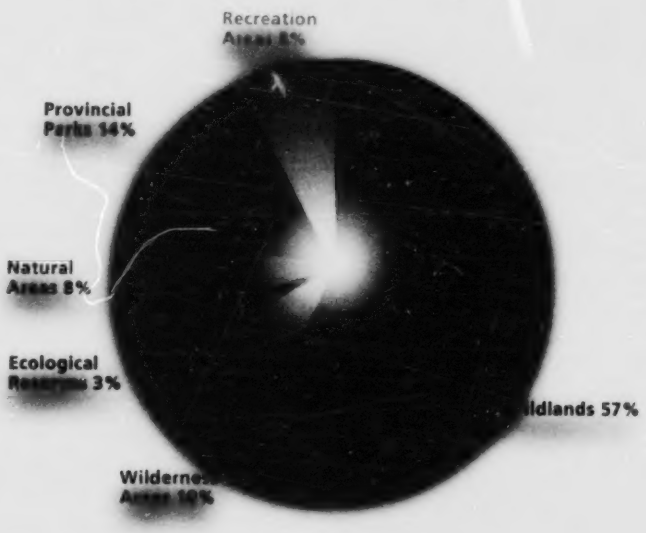
Protecting Special Places

In 1995, the Alberta government announced the Special Places program, an initiative anchored by four internationally recognized goals (see page 5). Special Places will balance environmental priorities with economic realities to meet our objective of sustainable development.

Through the Special Places program we are setting aside areas representing Alberta's six natural regions and 20 sub-regions. The result will be a network of protected areas that represents the province's environmental diversity.

Alberta's existing provincial parks, wilderness areas, ecological reserves, wildland parks, natural areas, Willmore Wilderness Park and national parks are already part of this network.

New parks and protected areas are especially important in natural regions that are currently under-represented. Special Places are still needed in virtually every natural region except the Rocky Mountains. A number of sites are being reviewed and more will be considered in the coming years.



The parks and protected areas network currently (2001) protects over 20,000 sq. km of Alberta's land area (excluding national parks), which captures much of the province's environmental diversity.

101-05505/

Recreation and Protected Areas Network Goals Recognized Internationally

Preservation: To preserve and protect in perpetuity a network of representative, special and outstanding natural landscapes and features as well as landscape-related prehistoric, historic and cultural resources in Alberta.

Heritage Appreciation: To provide opportunities to explore, understand and appreciate the natural, historical and cultural heritage of Alberta, and to enhance public awareness of our natural environment, and our relationship to and dependence on it.

Outdoor Recreation: To provide a variety of intensive and dispersed outdoor recreation opportunities and related facilities and services.

Tourism: To encourage residents and visitors to discover and enjoy the natural, historical and cultural resources of the province through a variety of recreation opportunities, facilities and accommodation services.

Little Fish Lake Provincial Park provides a natural setting for a relaxing afternoon; Government of Alberta

An interpreter speaks to a group of cub-scouts at Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory; Steve Lane

Ancient native rock art preserved at Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park; G. Milani

A Spectrum of Protected Areas

The province's network of parks and protected areas covers over 20,000 square kilometres. The network includes a spectrum of protected spaces, from ecological reserves established around fragile environments requiring the most protection possible, to recreation areas where facilities for intensive outdoor recreation activities are provided. In between these two ends of the spectrum are provincial parks, natural areas, wilderness areas and wildlands.

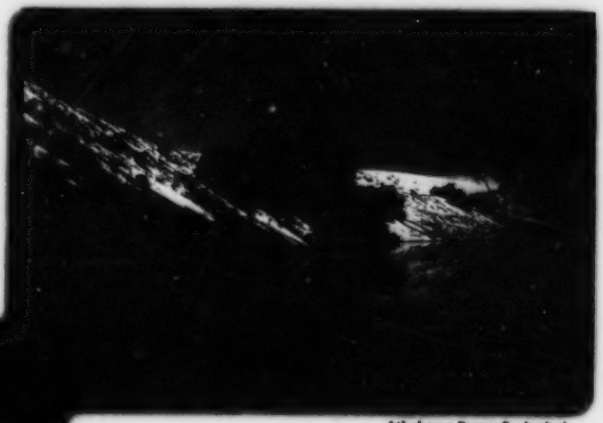
In time, all natural regions and subregions will be represented within this spectrum.

Ecological Reserves

Since 1981, some of Alberta's rarest and most fragile landscapes, plants, animals and geological features have been given special protection under the Ecological Reserves Program. While these reserves, like Holmes Crossing and Plateau Mountain, were established primarily to allow scientific research, visitors interested in photography, watching wildlife and other low impact activities are welcome to visit. The unusual nature of many of these reserves requires skillful stewardship. The Ecological Reserves Program is managed by a team of resource experts from Alberta Environment and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Wilderness Areas

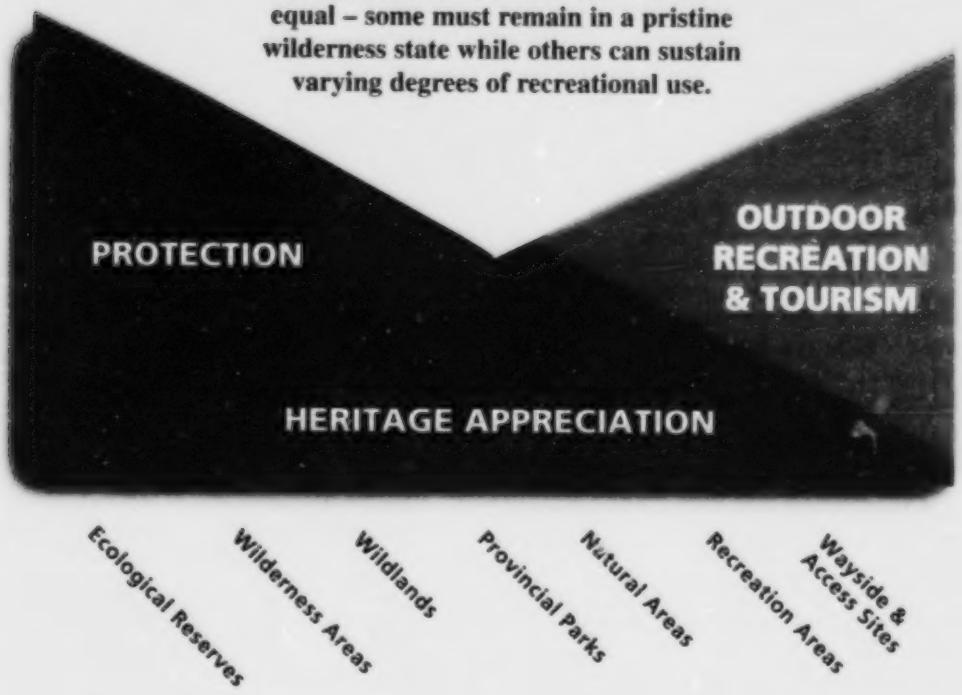
Alberta's parks and protected areas include three wilderness areas, Siffleur, Ghost River and White Goat, bordering Banff and Jasper national parks. Together the three encompass 1000 sq km of rugged terrain and fragile environments. Within their boundaries no developments of any kind are permitted. Travel here is only by foot. Fishing, hunting and trapping are not allowed. Collection, destruction or removal of plant or animal material, fossils or other objects of geological, ethnological, historical or scientific interest is strictly prohibited.



Athabasca Dunes Ecological Reserve; Archie Landals

Kakwa Wildland Provincial Park, one of Alberta's first wildland parks; Government of Alberta

Not all Parks and Protected Areas are equal – some must remain in a pristine wilderness state while others can sustain varying degrees of recreational use.



Wildland Parks

These parks, like Kakwa and Fort Assiniboine Sandhills, are large and undeveloped. Experienced horse trippers, backcountry campers, cross-country skiers and mountain bikers will find lots to explore with few signs of people, or facilities.

Provincial Parks

Provincial parks lie in the middle of the spectrum. They protect provincially significant natural, historical and cultural landscapes and features. They also provide opportunities for a variety of activities from hiking to swimming to camping. Families often visit parks for a day or more to enjoy the outdoors and to take part in recreational activities and interpretive programs.

Some of our best loved parks are Dinosaur, Peter Lougheed, Lesser Slave Lake and Cypress Hills.

Natural Areas

Alberta's Natural Areas are protected lands with a dual purpose: to allow some recreation but also to preserve aspects of the province's biological and physical diversity. Though not as strictly protected as provincial parks and ecological reserves, they are not highly developed for recreational use either. In many cases Natural Areas, like La Saline and Harper Creek, are in remote or inaccessible locations. Visitors to more accessible areas, like Wagner or the Upper J. J. Collett, are welcome to use these places for hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, berry picking, birdwatching, photography, enjoying nature and school field trips. Some Natural Areas are fragile, others can support a variety of outdoor activities.

Provincial Recreation Areas

Recreation areas support a range of outdoor activities in natural, modified or man-made settings. Wayside and Access Sites serve as rest stops for travellers, local picnic sites and as staging areas and access sites to rivers, lakes, reservoirs and adjacent Crown land.

Protected Areas Partners

We are committed to protecting natural, historical and cultural landscapes while providing opportunities to explore and learn about our heritage through heritage interpretation and environmental education.

In trying to keep a balance among all four goals, we have discovered the value of partnership with Albertans. For more than a decade now, volunteers have played a major role in the parks and protected areas network. They assist in many aspects of stewardship, from acting as hosts in our campgrounds, to maintaining and nurturing natural areas, to creating interpretive programs that add meaning to park visits to serving on public advisory boards. Local business people follow high standards set by the government and add their own creative ideas to operate provincial campgrounds in parks and recreation areas. Businesses and private citizens also offer donations to trust funds like the Park and WildlifeVentures.

Together these partners help us to meet all of our goals. This allows the parks and protected areas network to dedicate more energy to the preservation of the land and the creation of heritage appreciation opportunities. Through their enthusiasm and dedication, Albertans have shown that protection of the environment is not just the role of the government, but the responsibility of all Albertans.

A volunteer interpreter leads an interpretive walk at Whitney Lakes Provincial Park, Government of Alberta

Our private campground operators welcome visitors from all over the world, D. Dodge

Volunteer stewards training for management of Milk River Natural Area, Joyce Gould

Become Involved With Alberta's Parks and Protected Areas

Are you a history buff, an avid hiker, an archaeology addict, a wildlife watcher? Do you enjoy meeting new people, having your ideas heard and setting the groundwork for new parks and protected areas initiatives? Then consider volunteering for:

- greeting and providing information to visitors from around Alberta and the world at our parks by becoming a Volunteer Host
- leading environmental programs and special events
- adopting a Protected Area by becoming a Volunteer Steward
- serving on advisory boards, or
- joining a co-operating association.

You can make a difference by becoming personally involved with the protection and preservation of our wildlands.

Interested? Give us a call at 427-7009, or talk to the park staff next time you're visiting your favourite protected area.

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A volunteer interpreter leads an interpretive walk at Whitney Lakes Provincial Park; Government of Alberta

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Albertans Benefit!

Public involvement is critical to successful protected areas management; Government of Alberta

A quiet moment at Saskatoon Island Provincial Park; Government of Alberta

A Canadian Heritage Rivers System management planning team field trip along the Clearwater River, recently nominated to the CHRS; Government of Alberta

Research is an importa component of pa management; Governme of Alber

In our protected places, present and future generations can experience, understand and appreciate their natural heritage and interdependence with their environment.

Areas most protected from human impact, like ecological reserves, act as living laboratories and preserve ecological processes and biological diversity. They serve as scientific benchmarks to evaluate the sustainability of resource management practices upon which our continued prosperity relies.

Our physical, spiritual and emotional health improves through opportunities for outdoor recreation in protected natural landscapes. Our quality of life rises, if only by the knowledge that these areas remain wild and undisturbed for our descendants and us.

Visitors from all over the world come to Alberta, drawn by the excitement of adventure in a rare place of unspoiled natural landscapes and abundant wildlife. Tourism based on our world-renowned natural resources generates huge economic benefits for all Albertans. Our parks and protected areas, scattered across the province, entice travellers into many regions and municipalities. Our continued reputation as a community that values and protects our wild and natural spaces is vital to achieving our tourism potential.

The Natural Regions Of Alberta

Boreal chickadee, Boreal Forest Natural Region; K. Morck

Elk are abundant i the Foothills Natura Region; G. Milar

Aspens in autumn, Parkland Natural Region; Government of Alberta

Milk River Natur Area, located in th Grassland Natur Region; Joyce Gou

Alberta is renowned for the beauty and diversity of its natural resources. Landscapes vary from hot, dry badlands, to vast, unbroken forests, to alpine tundra and massive icefields.

These landscapes can be divided into six distinctly different natural regions, each having several subregions. Classification of these regions is based on geology, landforms, soils, hydrology and other factors like climate, vegetation and wildlife.

The **Grassland Natural Region**, in the southeast corner of the province, runs north to Coronation and west to Calgary. This is the hottest, driest and windiest natural region in the province, where grasses and shrubs are the most common types of plants.

The **Rocky Mountain Natural Region** lies along the Continental Divide. Here fast flowing streams and rivers dissect towering mountain ranges and feed Alberta's major river systems. Thick coniferous forests are found at lower elevations, and alpine tundra at higher elevations.

To the east and parallel to the mountains lies an area of lower hills and ridges covered by coniferous forests. This is the **Foothills Natural Region**.

East of the **Foothills Natural Region** and north and west of the **Grassland Natural Region**, a mosaic of wetlands, rich grasslands and deciduous forests forms the **Parkland Natural Region**. It extends north to Edmonton and St. Paul, and west to Rimbey and Olds. A small area of Parkland can also be found around Peace River and Grande Prairie.

By far the largest natural region in the province is the **Boreal Forest Natural Region**. The mysterious boreal forest is the most extensive forest type in Canada and one of the least understood. Here, vast stands of aspen, balsam poplar and white spruce are broken up by lakes and large areas of muskeg where black spruce and tamarack are the dominant tree species.

The **Canadian Shield Natural Region** stretches into Alberta in its northeast corner. This small portion of the vast Canadian Shield is formed of granite covered with thin soils, patchy coniferous forests, shifting sand dunes and many small, shallow lakes.

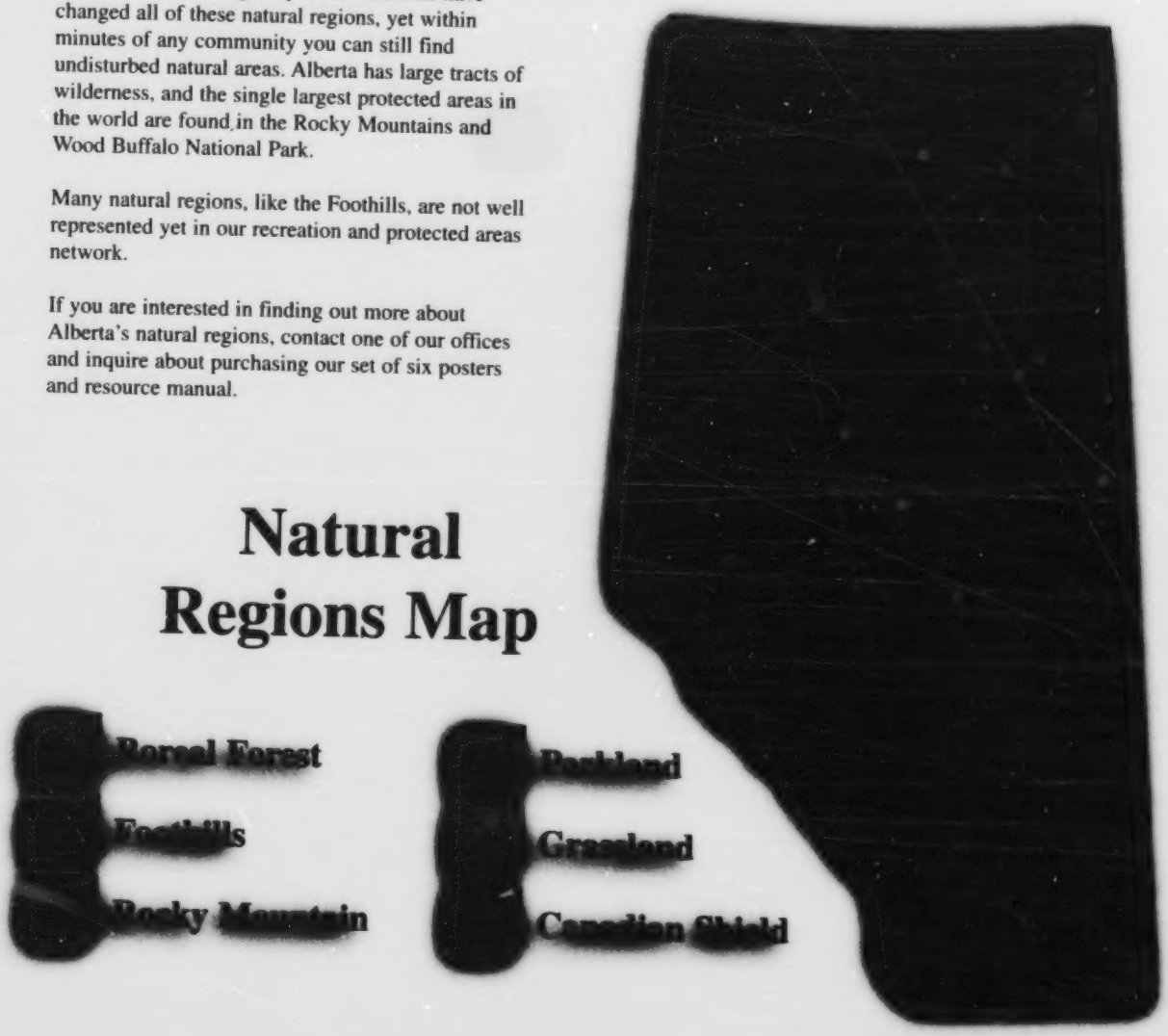
Our towns, cities, highways and industries have changed all of these natural regions, yet within minutes of any community you can still find undisturbed natural areas. Alberta has large tracts of wilderness, and the single largest protected areas in the world are found in the Rocky Mountains and Wood Buffalo National Park.

Many natural regions, like the Foothills, are not well represented yet in our recreation and protected areas network.

If you are interested in finding out more about Alberta's natural regions, contact one of our offices and inquire about purchasing our set of six posters and resource manual.

Sand dune at Lake Athabasca, located in the Canadian Shield Natural Region; Archie Landals

Natural Regions Map



GRASSLAND

GRASSLAND NATURAL REGION

Cushion cactus thrive in the warm, dry Grassland climate; Cleve Wershler

This area is found in southern Alberta from the south and east borders, west to the Rocky Mountains and north to the Parkland Natural Region in the central part of the province. Terrain is flat to gently rolling with some large hills. Rivers in this area have carved deep valleys with coulees, ravines and badlands. Within the region, there are four subregions: the **Mixed Grass**, **Dry Mixed Grass**, **Northern Fescue**, and **Foothills Fescue**.

This region is typically the warmest and driest in Alberta. It is also a geologist's dream with badlands, exposed bedrock, carved sandstone cliffs, ancient boulders and other remains of glacial retreat punctuating the relatively flat plain. Even though much of the grasslands have been cultivated, nature enthusiasts exploring the parks and natural areas here are greatly rewarded with an abundance of birds and grassland residents like cottontail, pronghorn and ground squirrel. Wildflower fans too will not be disappointed, with mauve blankets of prairie crocus in the spring, yellow splashes of golden bean and prickly pear cactus in early summer, jewel-hued scarlet mallow in summer and the purples and yellows of aster and goldenrod in the fall.

For watching wildlife, head for the **Dry Mixed Grass Subregion** to see birds like horned lark, longspurs, sharp-tailed grouse and Baird's sparrow. Richardson's ground squirrel are never far away in this mix of medium tall grasses like spear grass and western wheat grass and short grasses like blue grama. Look for pronghorn in sagebrush communities and for the kangaroo rat and western hognose snake in sandy areas. Badlands provide nesting sites for golden eagle, prairie falcon and rock wren while wetlands attract a profusion of birds, amphibians and garter snakes. Many of the same species are found throughout the Grassland Natural Region.

Kennedy Coulee Ecological Reserve preserves Dry Mixedgrass habitat; Joyce Gould

Alberta's badlands are a unique landscape within the Grassland Natural Region; Government of Alberta

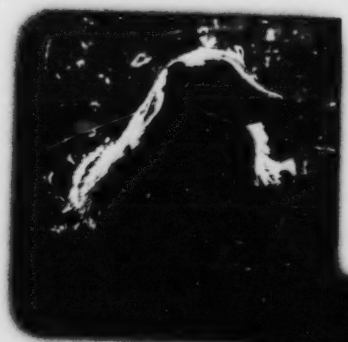
Young Richardson's ground squirrel; Cleve Wershler

The **Mixed Grass Subregion** is slightly moister and cooler and extends in a band from south of Drumheller to the Montana border. It skirts the Cypress Hills, Sweetgrass Hills and Milk River Ridge.

Rolling and hilly terrain shaped by melting glaciers is the domain of rough fescue grass. Along with June grass, western porcupine grass, northern wheat grass, and Hooker's oat grass, the expanses of fescue in the **Northern Fescue Subregion** host many different wildflowers including prairie crocus, prairie sagewort, mouse-ear chickweed, prairie smoke and wild blue flax. This subregion stretches from Three Hills to the Saskatchewan border. Some parkland plants and animals creep into this subregion.

Cottonwoods line the river valleys in the Foothills Fescue Subregion; Government of Alberta

The **Foothills Fescue Subregion** sweeps into the foothills and covers the Porcupine Hills, Sweetgrass Hills and parts of the Cypress Hills plateau. Winters are milder here where warm Chinook winds drastically alter winter temperatures and melt the snowpack. Fescues and oat grasses dominate providing food for ground squirrel and elk. Narrow-leaf cottonwood forests, found nowhere else in Canada, line the major southern rivers and provide nesting sites for hawks and other birds and shelter for many animals. In spite of the warmer winters, wildlife watchers will find fewer animal species here than in other parts of the Grassland Natural Region.



The badger makes its home in the Grassland Natural Region; Government of Alberta

The Foothills Fescue Subregion gives way to the Montane Subregion of the Rocky Mountain Natural Region in southwestern Alberta; Government of Alberta

An interpreter explains the petroglyphs that line the valley walls at Writing-on-Stone; Cleve Wershler

The Milk River valley, which runs through Writing-on-Stone, is home to the pronghorn antelope; Government of Alberta

Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park

A landscape can enrich the human soul! From steep sandstone cliffs and strange rock formations called hoodoos, to native prairie grasslands and the meandering Milk River, Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park is a setting that provokes as well as satisfies, intrigues as well as calms. It's no wonder that native people have held this place sacred for thousands of years.

The Blackfoot call it AISINAIHPI "where the drawings are". According to legends, the hundreds of carvings and paintings covering the sandstone cliffs were put there by spirits that inhabit the rocks.

In the late 1800s, men of the NWMP outpost here upheld the law and were renowned for their fairness in dealing with the various Plains tribes. But, it wasn't easy. Long days, and weeks of boredom were only occasionally interrupted by surprised whiskey smugglers travelling up the coulees from Montana, only to find themselves in the backyard of the local law.

The reconstructed Northwest Mounted Police outpost is a monument to their connection with this valley; G. Milani

Mystical hoodoos, sculpted over thousands of years by wind and rain, come in many strange shapes; James Martin

Today the park is the keeper of this precious history and a wealth of outdoor experiences. Come and explore the rugged backcountry coulees, or take a leisurely walk along the self-guided interpretive trail. Wildlife viewing is superb! Cottontail, pronghorn, deer, and an amazing variety of birds and other animals make this valley their home. Spend an evening floating down the Milk River by canoe or raft. There's really no better way to meet and observe the wildlife.

When the sun goes down, listen for the coyote choir and the nocturnal inquiries of Alberta's provincial bird, the great horned owl!

Highlights:

- **largest concentration of native rock art on the North American plains**
- **a "Great Canadian Park" on Discovery Channel**
- **interpretive displays, events and walks to special, restricted access areas**
- **tour a reconstructed 1885 NWMP outpost**

A panoramic view of the sandstone cliffs at Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park; Government of Alberta

Close-up of an ancient petroglyph; G. Miller

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A panoramic view of the sandstone cliffs at Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park; Government of Alberta

Dinosaur Provincial Park

At the entrance to Dinosaur Provincial Park, there is a viewpoint where you can park and walk to the edge of Alberta's own Grand Canyon! At your feet, the Red Deer River Valley is cloaked with rugged, but fragile rock formations and lush cottonwood groves. Amazing wind and water carved rock sculptures expose rich fossil beds that help to solve the 75 million year old puzzle of the earth's past. This is a very special place!

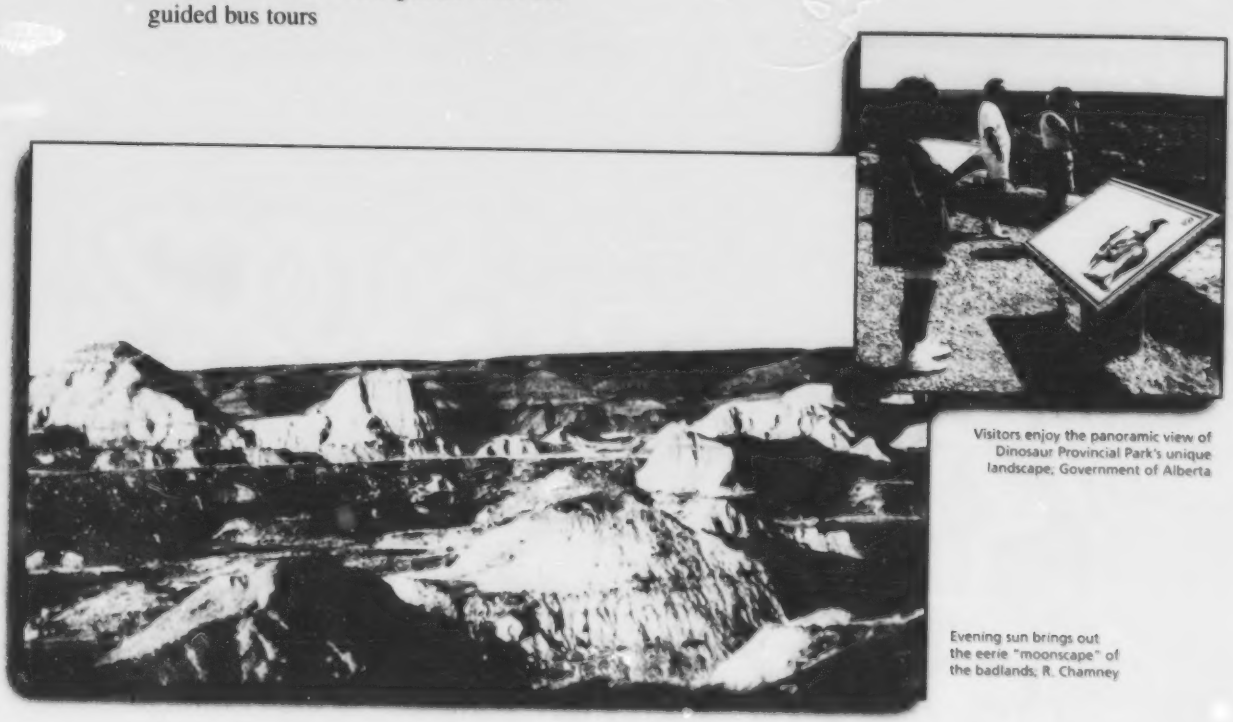
The endangered riparian habitat of the Red Deer River, the vast expanse of sculpted badlands and the priceless bounty of fossils are all found together in Dinosaur Provincial Park. The United Nations added the park to the World Heritage Site List in 1979, recognizing its value to citizens of the world.

This is a place you will want to explore! The Field Station of the Royal Tyrrell Museum is a good starting point. Or start with a walk along one of five different trails. Take a guided tour into those mystical badlands for a close up look. Call in advance to reserve your spot! Visit the preparation lab in the field station or attend amphitheatre presentations for the story of the park's fascinating heritage.

Highlights

- awe-inspiring moonscape of badlands
- nearly 300 species of plants and animals including 35 fossil dinosaurs
- most dinosaur fossils in one spot on earth
- interpretive events, self-guided trails and guided bus tours

A hoodoo at Dinosaur Provincial Park; Government of Alberta



Visitors enjoy the panoramic view of Dinosaur Provincial Park's unique landscape; Government of Alberta

Evening sun brings out the eerie "moonscape" of the badlands, R. Chamney

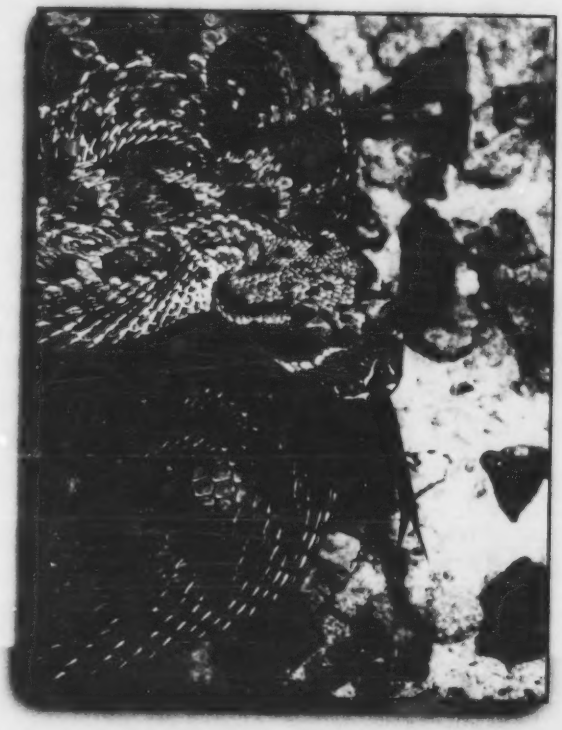
Rattlesnake Monitoring Project

The rattlesnake is an integral part of this grassland ecosystem. As predators, they keep populations of small animals in check; as prey, they feed other animals. Unfortunately, human disturbance and destruction of habitat has placed these snakes in danger.

The prairie rattlesnake plays a role in the ecological balance here, at the northern limit of its range. Park rangers have been recording sightings and monitoring snake activity for over five years. In 1996, partners from the Canadian Wildlife Service and Operation Grasslands Community introduced new methods of tracking snakes. We now can locate and protect their winter quarters or hibernacula, collect information about travel patterns and create a data bank of the physical characteristics of each snake. As we find out more about these fascinating animals, our management practises change. Our park is able, more than ever to protect the prairie rattlesnake and ensure its future survival.

When you're visiting Dinosaur Provincial Park, be sure to ask park staff how the project is progressing.

Prairie rattlesnake,
Cleve Wershler



YOU ARE IN RATTLESNAKE COUNTRY

You probably will never see a rattlesnake. These shy creatures attack only when surprised or threatened. A rattlesnake detected in time is not dangerous, provided you and the other members of your party, including your dog, avoid it. Keep in mind the following:

DO

- watch where you are walking
- examine an area before you sit down to rest
- stay in open areas
- prod grasses or bushes before going through them to allow snakes to move away
- stop young children from running ahead or climbing hills

DO NOT

- handle an injured or dead rattlesnake
- move if you hear a rattling sound until you know the snake's location – then move away
- lift any rocks or logs, or reach into any holes

Dry Mixed Grass Subregion

Dinosaur Provincial Park

At the entrance to Dinosaur Provincial Park, there is a viewpoint where you can park and walk to the edge of Alberta's own Grand Canyon! At your feet, the Red Deer River Valley is cloaked with rugged, but fragile rock formations and lush cottonwood groves. Amazing wind and water carved rock sculptures expose rich fossil beds that help to solve the 75 million year old puzzle of the earth's past. This is a very special place!

The endangered riparian habitat of the Red Deer River, the vast expanse of sculpted badlands and the priceless bounty of fossils are all found together in Dinosaur Provincial Park. The United Nations added the park to the World Heritage Site List in 1979, recognizing its value to citizens of the world.

This is a place you will want to explore! The Field Station of the Royal Tyrrell Museum is a good starting point. Or start with a walk along one of five different trails. Take a guided tour into those mystical badlands for a close up look. Call in advance to reserve your spot! Visit the preparation lab in the field station or attend amphitheatre presentations for the story of the park's fascinating heritage.

Highlights:

- awe-inspiring moonscape of badlands
- nearly 300 species of plants and animals including 35 fossil dinosaurs
- most dinosaur fossils in one spot on earth
- interpretive events, self-guided trails and guided bus tours

A hoodoo at Dinosaur Provincial Park; Government of Alberta

Visitors enjoy the panoramic view of Dinosaur Provincial Park's unique landscape; Government of Alberta

Evening sun brings out the eerie "moonscape" of the badlands; R. Chamney

Rattlesnake Monitoring Project

The rattlesnake is an integral part of this grassland ecosystem. As predators, they keep populations of small animals in check; as prey, they feed other animals. Unfortunately, human disturbance and destruction of habitat has placed these snakes in danger.

The prairie rattlesnake plays a role in the ecological balance here, at the northern limit of its range. Park rangers have been recording sightings and monitoring snake activity for over five years. In 1996, partners from the Canadian Wildlife Service and Operation Grasslands Community introduced new methods of tracking snakes. We now can locate and protect their winter quarters or hibernacula, collect information about travel patterns and create a data bank of the physical characteristics of each snake. As we find out more about these fascinating animals, our management practises change. Our park is able, more than ever to protect the prairie rattlesnake and ensure its future survival.

When you're visiting Dinosaur Provincial Park, be sure to ask park staff how the project is progressing.

Prairie rattlesnake;
Cleve Wershler

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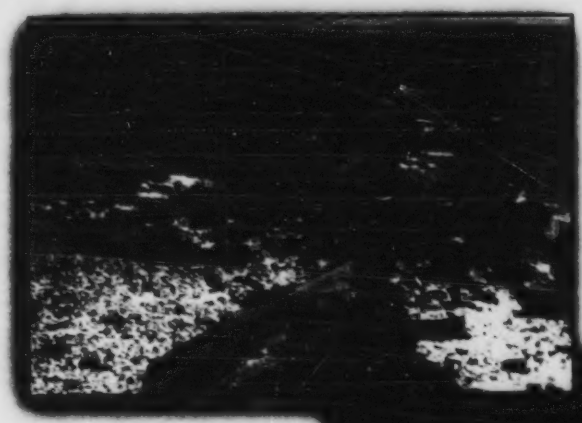
Dry Mixed Grass Subregion

Red Rock Coulee Natural Area

The Bull's Head is a gentle but distinct rise in the surrounding plains of southeastern Alberta. On its western slope, Red Rock Coulee cuts a jagged path into the upland grassland. Bedrock lies close to the surface and exposes a fragile environment of hoodoos, carved formations, bentonitic clays, green and grey sandstone layers, dark grey shales and thin bands of ironstone. Most fascinating though, are the sandstone concretions, rounded red boulders up to 21/2 m across. Under ancient waters sand, calcite and iron oxide built up around a core of shell, leaf, and bone forming a ball that grew ever larger in the circulating water. The iron oxide gave the boulders their red colour.

This is a fascinating area with intriguing rock formations and fossils. Hikers and geology enthusiasts will find this area an excellent spot to explore.

Rock formation known as a concretion; Joyce Gould



Concretions formed by glaciers dot the landscape at Red Rock Coulee Natural Area; June Markwart

Highlights:

- an eerie landscape of badlands, hoodoos and huge red boulders
- excellent location for an environmental education field trip
- among the world's largest concretions

Panoramic view of Red Rock Coulee; Joyce Gould

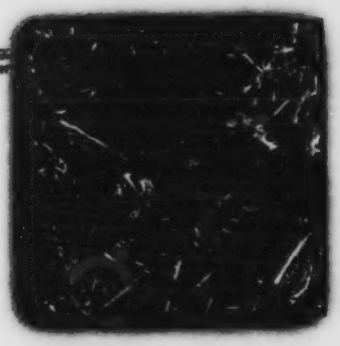
Hand Hills Ecological Reserve and Little Fish Lake Provincial Park

The ecological reserve, in the largest natural fescue grassland ecosystem left in Canada, is located in the Hand Hills. Occasional aspen groves and shrublands punctuate the otherwise grass covered landscape. There are over 250 plant species here, including several rare ones, a variety of reptiles, amphibians, and mammals and over 130 bird species.

The Hand Hills were used by native people as a source of stone for their tools. Sharp-eyed explorers may find a quarry site, teepee rings and hearths.

There are no facilities in this ecological reserve but nearby lies Little Fish Lake Provincial Park with its quiet, shady campground. The park is an important staging area for snow goose, Ross's goose, white pelican, loons, tundra swan, and mergansers. Watch for pronghorn, mule deer, white-tailed jackrabbit, Richardson's ground squirrel, badger and long-tailed weasel.

Sorry, there is no fishing or swimming in this prairie pothole.



Northern leopard frog
Cleve Wershler

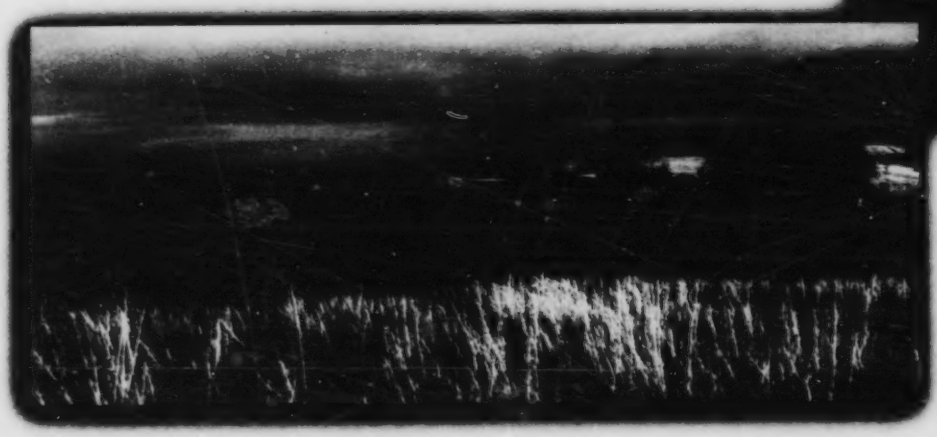
Little Fish Lake Provincial Park is ideal for a quiet get-away
Government of Alberta

The shooting star is one of the many flowers you'll find at Little Fish Lake Provincial Park; Government of Alberta

Highlights:

- protects a fescue grassland ecosystem
- watch for peregrine falcon, piping plover, ferruginous hawk and long-tailed weasel
- patches of uncommon crowfoot violet, small flowered evening primrose, yellow paintbrush and mountain shooting star
- important staging area for migratory northern birds

Government of Alberta



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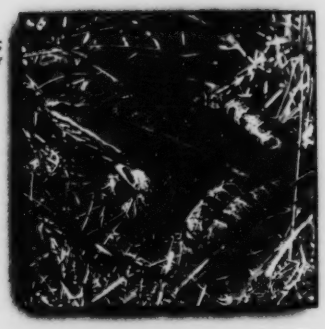

Northern leopard frog; Cleve Wershler

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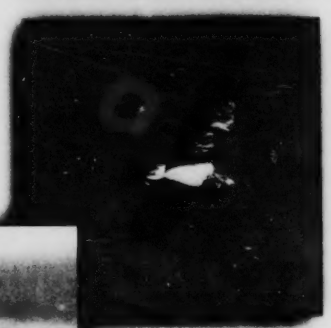

Swainson's hawk; Government of Alberta

Little Fish Lake; Government of Alberta

Fish Creek Provincial Park

This large park, within Alberta's largest city, includes about 20 km of the Fish Creek Valley. Don't be fooled by its location though, this park is rich in historic and natural sites and is a great escape from the hustle and bustle of downtown Calgary.

You'll find wetlands, spruce forests, poplar woods and grasslands. Great blue heron and Alberta's provincial bird, the great horned owl, are just two of many important species here. Other bird species, beaver, hare, red squirrel, coyote and deer make this their home.

Ancient teepee rings, buffalo kill sites, and the first white settler's cabin provide historical evidence of Calgary's early years. A successful ranch operation was located here as well as Alberta's first factory, a woollen mill, built and operated by William Shaw.

These natural and cultural features provide an excellent setting for learning about our history. From September to June, Fish Creek Environmental Learning Centre provides hands-on activities for school and youth groups.

The creek for which the Park is named; Government of Alberta

Highlights:

- Alberta's largest urban provincial park
- 46 km of hiking, cycling and equestrian trails
- swimming and skating at Sikome Lake
- interpretive displays, programs and self-guided trails
- restored 1800s Bow Valley Ranch house
- dynamic programs for schools and youth groups at the Fish Creek Environmental Learning Centre

Trail adjacent to Fish Creek Learning Centre; Government of Alberta

The restored Bow Valley Ranche House; Government of Alberta

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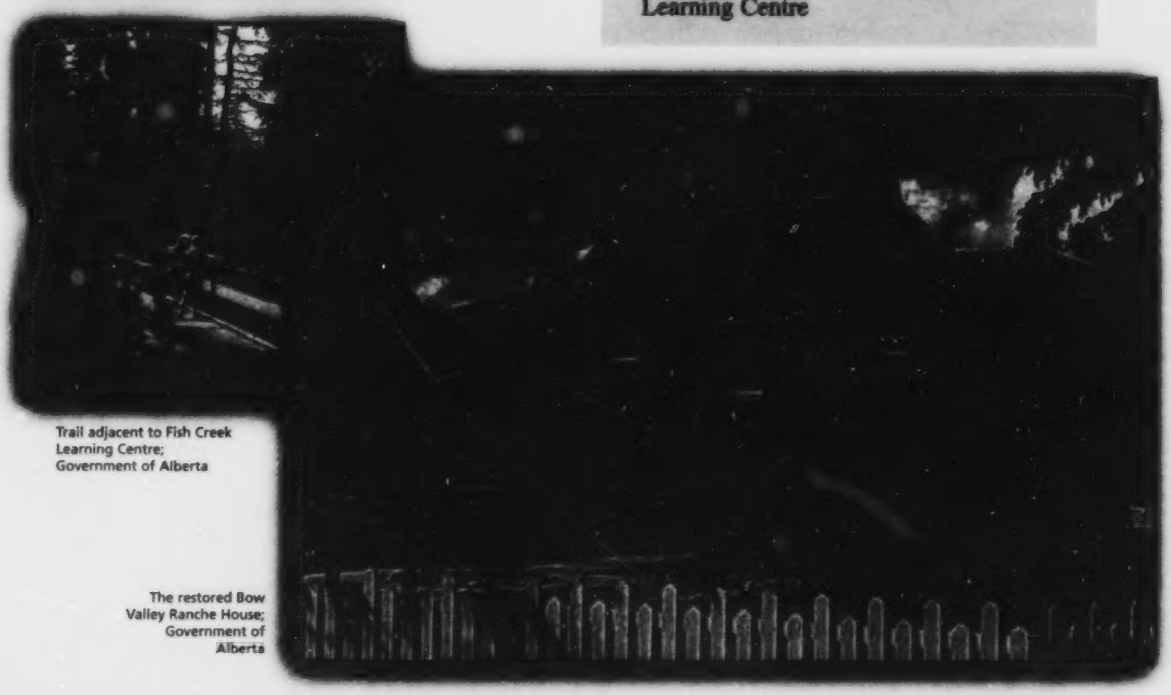

Trail adjacent to Fish Creek Learning Centre; Government of Alberta

The restored Bow Valley Ranche House; Government of Alberta

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATURAL REGION

Bighorn sheep are common in the Rocky Mountain Natural Region; Cleve Wershler

The **Rocky Mountain Natural Region** is likely the best known natural region in Alberta. Visitors come from around the world to marvel at the beauty or challenge themselves at adventure sports in some of the most rugged topography in Alberta. From Waterton Lakes National Park in the south to its most northern reaches in Kakwa Wildland Park, elevations rise from major river valleys 1000 metres above sea level to 3700 metre peaks along the Continental Divide.

The **Montane Subregion** covers the lower reaches of this natural region. There it endures winds and relatively little rain and snowfall. Winter Chinook winds often melt the snow, leaving grass exposed or under only a thin covering. The mosaic of grassy meadows, aspen, lodgepole pine, Douglas fir and mixedwood forests in these dry valleys provides critical winter habitat for such animals as elk, bighorn sheep, deer and coyote. Wetlands are home to moose, beaver, muskrat and waterfowl as well as osprey.

The Montane gives way rapidly to the cooler, moister **Subalpine Subregion**. Closed forests of lodgepole pine, Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir and, in places, larch, tamarack and whitebark pine provide shelter, but modest food sources, for elk and deer. Instead, look for black bear, cougar, marten, snowshoe hare, red squirrel and in some areas, mountain caribou and wolverine. The heavy snowfalls in these areas create obstacles for many animals. Only those with long legs like moose, or whose big, splayed feet can support them on the surface, like hare, lynx, and caribou, remain in the Subalpine year-round. Birds too, become scarcer in the winter but gray jay, Clark's nutcracker, common raven, boreal chickadee and spruce grouse are not too hard to find. Avalanche paths are particularly rich in both plants and animals.

View of Rawson Lake, Peter Lougheed Provincial Park; Roy Finzel

The scenery in Alberta's Rock Mountains is unequalled in Nor America; B. Mak

A reflective moment for a cross-country skier at Boulton Creek in Kananaskis Country; Cleve Wershler

Horseback riding in the Rockies is the best you'll find anywhere; Government of Alberta

Rapids on the Elbow River; Government of Alberta

The **Alpine Subregion** is the domain of the hardy – plant, animal and visitor, alike. Short summers, cool temperatures and drying winds prevent trees from growing here. Shrubs like willow and a profusion of wildflowers cover alpine meadows with heathers, grouseberry, moss campion, white mountain avens and lichen. Mountain goat, bighorn sheep, mountain caribou, grizzly bear, hoary marmot, Columbian ground squirrel and ptarmigan, gray-crowned rosy finch, horned lark and American pipit call the Alpine Subregion home, at least in summer. Many alpine animals hibernate, migrate or move to the Subalpine or Montane subregions for the winter.

Plan Your Backcountry Trip

When travelling in a backcountry or wilderness area, know what lies ahead.

- Take along a map and compass, and know how to use them.
- Leave a copy of your route and estimated return with someone responsible.
- Discuss your plans with Natural Resources Service staff.
- Practise minimum impact camping.
- If you packed it in, pack it out.
- Be aware of the dangers of wild animals.
- Mountain weather can change suddenly – carry appropriate clothing and equipment.

A reflective moment for a cross-country skier at Boulton Creek in Kananaskis Country; Cleve Wershler

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Peter Lougheed Provincial Park

Whether you are driving the Highwood Pass, hiking or bicycling along aspen and spruce lined trails, or exploring a windswept ridge, the Kananaskis Valley is spectacular!

Travel on Canada's highest driveable pass to view alpine meadows surrounded by rugged peaks. Or take an easy hike along a self-guided interpretive trail. There are at least ten in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park that range from a few metres to 5 km in length. Cycle more than 12 km of paved trails; mountain bikers will find many challenging routes! Many kilometres of backcountry trails lead avid outdoors people deep into the alpine wilderness protected in this park.

Hardy plants such as the lichen on these rocks grow in the harsh environment of the Rockies; James Martin

Kananaskis Country, located in the Rocky Mountain Natural Region; Cleve Wershler

The visitor centre provides information about these activities and many more! Whitewater canoeists and kayakers can try the Kananaskis River while river backwaters and lakes invite the dedicated angler. Join park interpreters armed with interesting tidbits about this mountain habitat on a guided walk or at evening amphitheatre presentations. Displays, exhibits and interpretive signs along roadways and trails help create an understanding of this wild, fragile and complex environment.

Highlights:

- a "Drive Canadian Rockies" to Discovery Channel
- spectacular sightseeing, including Canada's highest drivable mountain pass
- hiking, cycling, nature trails, biking, [illegible] skiing, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, [illegible] snowmobiling, canoeing
- award winning interpretive programs and displays, including audio tapes, books and trails

Mountain goats are well suited to the rugged terrain of the Rockies; Government of Alberta

View of Upper Kananaskis Lake from Rawson Lake; Roy Finzel

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Highlights:

- a "Great Canadian Park" on Discovery Channel
- spectacular sightseeing, including Canada's hightest driveable mountain pass
- hiking, cycling, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, mountain climbing, canoeing
- award winning interpretive programs and displays, including signs along roads and trails

Mountain goats are well suited to the rugged terrain of the Rockies, Government of Alberta

View of Upper Kananaskis Lake from Rawson Lake; Roy Finzel

Willmore Wilderness Park

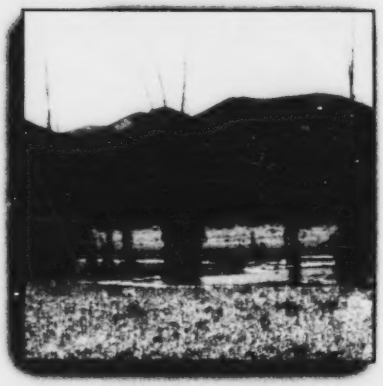
Imagine the view from one of the peaks on the Continental Divide – a meadow of blooming alpine flowers, thundering waterfalls, roaring river rapids and dark forests. The diversity of plants and animals, the craggy peaks and cliffs and the vast expanse of Willmore Wilderness Park leave a lasting impression on all who view them.

Staging areas like Rock Lake (see page 30) offer glimpses of the wonders beyond. Trails for hiking and horseback riding criss-cross the eastern part of this park. High peaks and dense forests block access to the west end and you'll find few trails west of the Smoky River. There is little trail maintenance and no designated campsites: visitors must be prepared for wilderness travel.

A trip into Willmore draws you into Alberta's rich human history. On the Thoreau Creek Pass Trail, old coal mining cabins are excellent subjects for photographers and painters. Old trapper cabins and grave sites are the legacy of the courageous men and women who lived and died in this harsh paradise.

Highlights:

- A "Great Canadian Park" on Discovery Channel
- Alberta's largest protected wilderness area outside of the national parks (4597 sq. km)
- spectacular glacier covered peaks, meadows, rolling foothills and wild rivers
- over 700 km of trails for hiking and horseback riding



Rock Creek valley, Willmore Wilderness Park; Lorna Allen

Trail riding is one of the best ways to experience Willmore; Government of Alberta

View into Willmore from Hell's Gate (Sulphur Gates) staging area; Lesia Boyko

Hiking in Willmore requires stamina and careful preparation; Government of Alberta

Tread Lightly!

With more and more people recognizing the physical and mental benefits of "getting away from it all" in the backcountry, we need to know how we affect the environment. Tread Lightly! is a program creating that kind of awareness – protecting wild lands through education and the promotion of minimum impact recreational practises.

Through educational materials and advertising, Tread Lightly! promotes minimum impact principles that can apply to motorized and non-motorized outdoor recreation activities. By adopting these principles, we can all help to ensure that the wild lands we value remain wild forever.

Take the Tread Lightly! pledge:

Travel only on designated roads.
Respect the rights of others.
Educate yourself.
Avoid stream banks, meadows and wildlife.
Drive and travel responsibly to protect the environment and preserve opportunities to enjoy outdoor recreation on Public Lands.

For more information about how you or your group can Tread Lightly!, or to become a Tread Lightly! Canada member, call Recreation and Protected Areas at (780) 427-7009 or write to:
Tread Lightly! Canada
P.O. Box 22049 Westmount Station
Waterloo, ON N2L 6J7

Subalpine & Alpine Subregions

Elbow-Sheep Wildland Provincial Park

Imagine 793 square kilometres of wilderness in the spectacular foothills and front ranges of the Canadian Rocky Mountains. There are no roads, only trails for hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding.

In addition to its namesake, the Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, you may be lucky enough to spot grizzly and black bear, elk, mountain goat, marten and snowshoe hare. Whistling marmots taunt you from their rocky perches. Keep your eyes peeled for ptarmigan, pika, Columbian ground squirrel and spruce grouse. Your camp may be visited by gray jay, pine siskin, boreal chickadee and red squirrel and at night, you may be treated to a wolf howl.

In the high country, alpine meadows ablaze with pink and white heather, white mountain avens and pink moss campion are the perfect place for photographing the breathtaking panorama of peaks and valleys that surround you.

Highlights:

- spectacular wilderness
- trails for hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding
- stop at the Elbow Valley Information Centre for trail updates
- abundant wildlife

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Rock Lake Provincial Recreation Area

Nestled in the mountains, just 5 km east of Willmore Wilderness, Rock Lake is a perfect access point for hikers and equestrian travellers, with special facilities for horses. Hike high above the shoreline, for breathtaking vistas of the deep, blue lake and the rugged mountains to the west or fish the lake for trout or pike.

Rock Lake is a beautiful and un-crowded camping destination; Government of Alberta

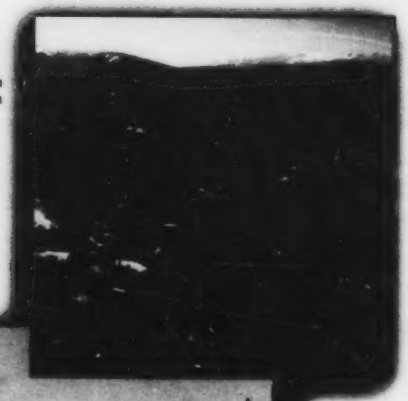
Highlights:

- staging area for equestrian riders and hikers entering Willmore Wilderness
- quiet, picturesque lake nestled in the lower Rocky Mountains
- trails to explore the recreation area and into Willmore Wilderness

Kakwa Wildland Park

If you seek the beauty of wilderness and the challenge of self-reliance, this park is for you. Access is a fair weather road that leads to Kakwa Falls. Four wheel drive vehicles are recommended. Other than trails for hiking or horseback riding and a day use area at the falls, there are no developed facilities.

Wildlife typical of wilderness – caribou, bighorn sheep, mountain goat and grizzly bear – roam throughout. The Kakwa River is a spawning ground for bull trout, a species now limited to cold, clean mountain streams.



The Kakwa River; Mel Kozun

The spectacular 30 metre-high Kakwa Falls; Government of Alberta

Highlights:

- Alberta's northernmost Rocky Mountains
- spectacular 30 metre high Kakwa Falls
- dramatic, rugged wilderness
- 300 year old Englemann spruce

Montane Subregion

Bow Valley Provincial Park; Government of Alberta

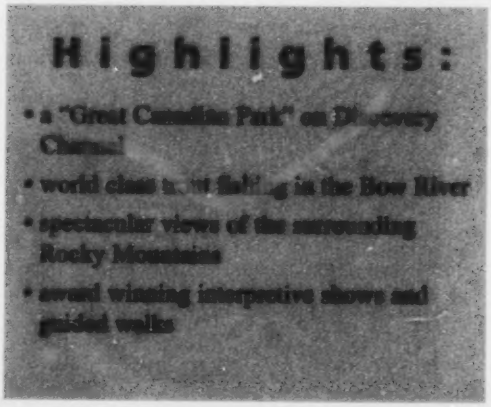
The warm waters of Bow Valley's mineral springs remain open year-round; Cleve Wershler

Bow Valley Provincial Park

Located on the floor of the scenic Bow Valley, the Bow River is famed as a trout fishing paradise. Explore river habitats and montane environments on one of the seven interpretive trails.

Long before the surrounding mountain areas emerge from winter, the 2 km Many Springs Trail transports you into a world of crocuses, orchids and primroses. The bubbling spring water remains above freezing year-round and it's not uncommon to see early arrived ducks paddling in these open puddles.

Enjoy a walk or bike ride along the many roads and trails. You'll see that the montane environment is one of contrasts and diversity. White spruce and aspen forests, limber pine and Douglas fir are interspersed with grasslands painted with wildflower brushstrokes. These lowlands provide valuable wintering grounds for elk and deer. You'll also find many songbirds, beaver, muskrat and Columbian ground squirrel.



Beauvais Lake Provincial Park

As early as 1881, newcomers settled near Beauvais Lake. Trails lead to these early homestead sites and to beaver ponds, wooded slopes and lakeside walks where you may see grizzly and black bear, elk, moose, eagle, osprey, numerous songbirds and many other species. A new 3 km trail leads along Mill Creek Canyon to a small backcountry campground. Along the way, many different wildflowers and birds will keep any nature enthusiast intrigued.

Beauvais Lake Provincial Park preserves a diverse montane landscape; Government of Alberta

Rock Lake Provincial Recreation Area

Nestled in the mountains, just 5 km east of Willmore Wilderness, Rock Lake is a perfect access point for hikers and equestrian travellers, with special facilities for horses. Hike high above the shoreline, for breathtaking vistas of the deep, blue lake and the rugged mountains to the west or fish the lake for trout or pike.

Rock Lake is a beautiful and un-crowded camping destination. Government of Alberta

Highlights:

- staging area for equestrian riders and hikers entering Willmore Wilderness
- quiet, picturesque lake tucked in the lower Rocky Mountains
- trails to explore the recreation area and into Willmore Wilderness

The Kakwa River. Mel Kozun

Kakwa Wildland Park

If you seek the beauty of wilderness and the challenge of self-reliance, this park is for you. Access is a fair weather road that leads to Kakwa Falls. Four wheel drive vehicles are recommended. Other than trails for hiking or horseback riding and a day use area at the falls, there are no developed facilities.

Wildlife typical of wilderness – caribou, bighorn sheep, mountain goat and grizzly bear – roam throughout. The Kakwa River is a spawning ground for bull trout, a species now limited to cold, clean mountain streams.

Highlights:

- Alberta's northernmost Rocky Mountains
- spectacular 30 metre high Kakwa Falls
- dramatic, rugged wilderness
- 300 year old Englemann spruce

The spectacular 30 metre-high Kakwa Falls. Government of Alberta

Bow Valley Provincial Park. Government of Alberta

The warm waters of Bow Valley's mineral springs remain open year round. Cleve Wershler

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Highlights:

- a "Great Canadian Park" on Discovery Channel
- world class trout fishing in the Bow River
- spectacular views of the surrounding Rocky Mountains
- award winning interpretive shows and guided walks

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Highlights:

- over 15 km of hiking and cross-country ski trails
- excellent rainbow trout fishing year-round
- diverse montane environment

Beauvais Lake Provincial Park preserves a diverse montane landscape. Government of Alberta

Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park

Where else on the Canadian prairies can you smell pine trees and see a carpet of prairie flowers? Where else can you gaze across the prairie landscape from the highest point of land east of the Canadian Rockies, sharing the same view once enjoyed by Plains natives, Metis hunters, Mounties and early ranchers?

In 1859, Captain John Palliser described the Cypress Hills as "an oasis in the desert." The hills today are an island of mixed forest and fescue grassland surrounded by short grass prairie and ranchland protected in Alberta and Saskatchewan as Canada's only Interprovincial Park.

In summer, hike the many trails, enjoy boating, fishing and other water sports, or participate in guided interpretive hikes, evening shows and special events. In winter, cross-country skis replace sneakers on the trails. Downhill skis and snowboards carve their marks at Hidden Valley Ski Hill.

Highlights:

- a "Great Canadian Park" on Discovery Channel
- preserves some of the prairie's most unusual ecosystems and landscapes
- rich in Canadian history
- a winter playground with downhill and cross-country skiing, ice fishing, winter camping, snowshoeing and tobogganing
- extensive interpretive and educational programs
- Canada's only interprovincial park

The town of Elkwater, on the shores of Elkwater Lake, E. Bork

A variety of trails allow visitors to explore this unique area, Government of Alberta

Conglomerate rock formations line coulee walls, June Markwart

Cypress Hills Provincial Park protects a unique "oasis" in the grassland, Government of Alberta

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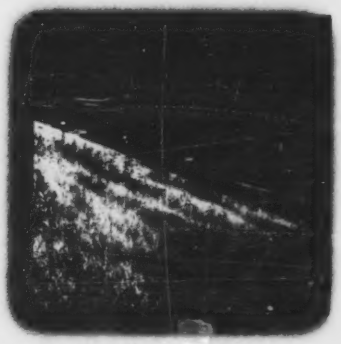


The town of Elkwater, on the shores of Elkwater Lake; E. Bork

A variety of trails allow visitors to explore this unique area; Government of Alberta

Conglomerate rock formations line coulee walls; June Markwart

Cypress Hills Provincial Park protects a unique "oasis" in the grassland; Government of Alberta

3 FOOTHILLS

FOOTHILLS NATURAL REGION

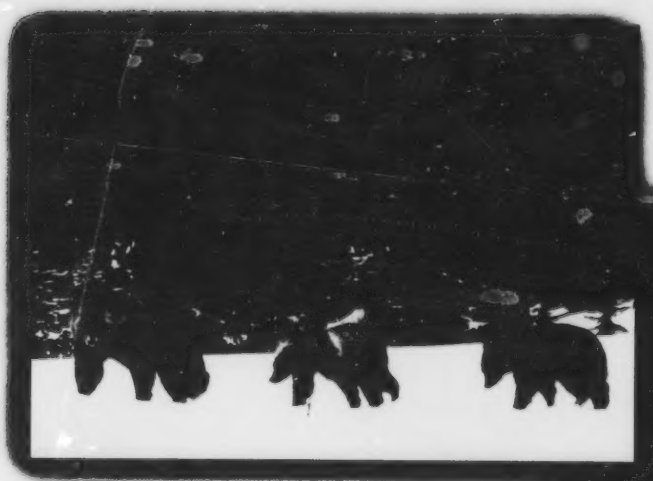
Lodgepole pine is a common tree species in the Foothills Natural Region; Government of Alberta

The **Foothills Natural Region** follows the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains and also includes outlying areas like the Swan Hills, Pelican Mountains and Clear Hills. The natural region is divided into two subregions, the **Upper Foothills** and the **Lower Foothills**. The **Upper Foothills** covers the higher elevations in the foothills and the outlying hills. The Lower Foothills spread eastward across lower elevations and occasionally westward along river valleys.

The **Upper Foothills Subregion** receives more precipitation and is cooler in summer and winter than the Lower Foothills. Its coniferous forests, populated by white spruce, black spruce, lodgepole pine and subalpine fir, shelter animals also found in the mountains or the boreal forest: pine siskin, white crowned sparrow, ruby crowned kinglet, black bear, grizzly, and elk.

In the **Lower Foothills**, boreal chickadee, spruce grouse, red squirrel, moose, yellow-bellied sapsucker, purple finch and rose-breasted grosbeak inhabit its mixedwood forests.

Representing the Foothills Natural Region are parks like Brown-Lowery in the south, Pierre Grey's Lakes in the north and Lesser Slave Lake in the outlying Pelican Mountains. All provide beautiful settings for wildlife watching, as well as outdoor activities that range from hiking, horseback riding and canoeing to beach activities and fishing.



The foothills and Rocky Mountains are home to the elusive grizzly bear; Grant Santos

Mule deer browse in an open meadow in the Foothills; Cliff Wallis

Lower Foothills Subregion

Carson-Pegasus Provincial Park

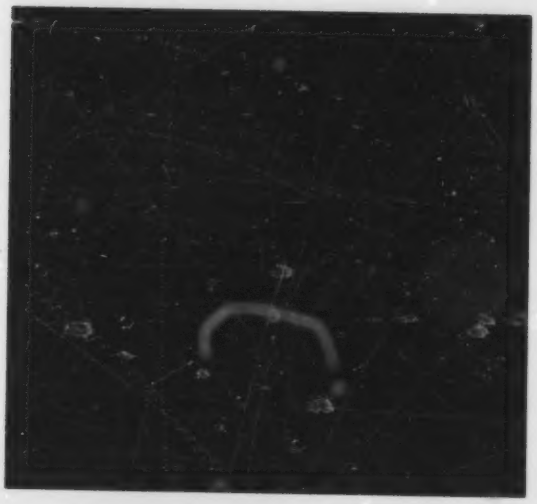
Carson-Pegasus is a beautiful park in the rolling Lower Foothills with a diverse range of habitats, from old growth forests mixed with stands of poplar, willow and birch, to black spruce bogs. A seawall running the length of the peninsula on McLeod Lake, is a great spot for fishing and walking. Stairs connect this walkway with the top of the peninsula, where you can continue along the roads and trails in the campground. Additional trails in the backcountry take you for peaceful walks along aspen and spruce shaded paths. In winter, try these routes on cross-country skis.

Both lakes have always been popular fishing spots: McLeod Lake, for rainbow trout and Little McLeod, for pike, yellow perch and whitefish. Historically, natives used this area for fishing, hunting and social activities as early as the 1600s. Today, you can guide your boat to the perfect spot as the mist is rising off

Canoeing and kayaking are very popular at Carson-Pegasus; Government of Alberta

the lake at dawn, or linger for that one last bite as the final rays of the sun reflect off the mirror smooth surface. Join the anglers on the seawall, shaded from the afternoon sun and cast your line. Maybe you'll hook "the big one".

If you're not fishing or hiking, you can while away the afternoon at the small, sandy beach on the west side of the peninsula. Pick up a family adventure pack and spend the afternoon bagging bugs or spotting sparrows with the help of these handy nature kits.



Fishing from the seawall on McLeod Lake; Government of Alberta

Mounted park ranger patrols are a rare sight in Alberta's parks and protected areas, but you're sure to spot them at Carson-Pegasus; Government of Alberta

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Highlights:

- one of Alberta's most popular year-round trout fishing spots
- hiking or cross-country ski trails along the lakeshore or through the rugged forest of aspen and spruce
- a shoreline seawall provides anglers of all ages and abilities easy access to great fishing
- one of a few provincial parks who use horseback mounted patrols

Crimson Lake Provincial Park

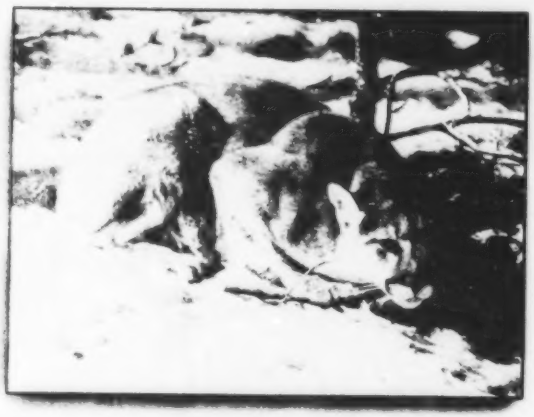
Just west of Rocky Mountain House, Crimson Lake Provincial Park is home to sandhill crane, elk, deer, moose, beaver and other foothills wildlife. In the skies above Twin Lakes osprey dive for trout, while great blue heron wade in the shoreline marsh.

Spend a day hiking or mountain biking the Amerada Trail to really get a feeling for this diverse environment. You'll discover bogs, fens, sand dunes and a beaver pond while travelling this 10 km loop through spruce, lodgepole pine and tamarack forests. Trailside exhibits tell about the petroleum industry active in the park. Or take a short trip to the boardwalk or the beaver pond, just part way along the trail. Join a guided walk or spend an evening at the Hearth for stories and singing around the campfire.

Whether wildlife watching or hiking, trout fishing or paddling your canoe, your days will be memorable.

Highlights:

- view displays at the visitor centre, or take out a self guided Family Adventure Pack
- the 10 km Amerada Trail completely encircles the lake
- interpretive events are offered each week from May to September
- fish for rainbow trout at Twin Lakes
- visit the nearby Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site



You may spot a cougar at Brown-Lowery Provincial Park. Government of Alberta

Marten Mountain at Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park

Experience foothills in the boreal forest on a visit to Marten Mountain. Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park protects Alberta's easternmost example of the Foothills Natural Region.

Hike Lily Lake Trail through an old growth forest to the lake stocked with trout. This is an interesting transition zone blending eastern and western boreal forests. Eastern trees like balsam fir are found next to typical western trees like the white spruce. This anomaly attracts eastern neotropical birds, not normally found in Alberta.

Highlights:

- interpretive viewpoint offers panoramic views of the valley and lake
- guided hikes into Lily Lake
- Walk Through Time self-guided trail
- unusual eastern neotropical birds

Brown-Lowery Provincial Park

Hiking trails perfect for exploring the Lower Foothills criss-cross this area of mixedwood forest, open grassy meadows, wetlands and balsam poplar stands.

Wildflowers and birds thrive in this diverse habitat. You'll notice signs of deer, elk, and coyote that roam throughout the park and occasionally see the track of a cougar or bear.

Highlights:

- diverse terrain and vegetation provide habitats for a variety of foothills wildlife
- excellent view of the Rockies from Eagleview Lookout
- close proximity to Calgary

William A. Switzer Provincial Park

High pine-topped ridges and kettle holes, remnants of retreating glaciers, surround a chain of five small lakes nestled on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. In these foothills, mountain plants and animals combine with boreal forests, creating an inviting landscape, and unique opportunities for nature enthusiasts. Add forest trails for hiking and bicycling, meadows of colorful wildflowers, and friendly staff for a getaway that is hard to beat.

Take a canoe trip down the meandering Jarvis Creek and connecting lakes, where interpretive signs inform you about wetland habitats and their inhabitants. Watch wildlife from a viewing blind, keeping an eye out for elk, deer, moose, otter, lynx, beaver, black and grizzly bears, wolves, owls, songbirds, ospreys and bald eagles. In winter, travel the trails on cross-country skis or snowshoe to discover evidence of the Park's animals. Any time of year, you can count on a unique, uncrowded and unforgettable experience.

Highlights:

- an uncrowded alternative en route to the Canadian Rockies
- self-guided interpretive trails and summer interpretive programs
- wildlife viewing platforms
- exceptional canoeing on Jarvis Creek or one of the interconnected lakes
- 30 km groomed cross-country ski trails

Pierre Grey's Lakes Provincial Recreation Area

This beautiful chain of five lakes invites you to fish for brook trout and rainbow trout. Bring your rowboat or canoe to enjoy the peace and tranquility here.

Hiking trails lead into cool, dark forests of spruce, pine and fir, where prickly rose, fireweed and twinflower provide flashes of colour. Keep a watchful eye for spotted sandpiper, ruby-crowned kinglet, great gray owl, hawk owl, gray jay, junco and white-crowned sparrow. Waterfowl like loon, bufflehead and goldeneye thrive in the abundant wetlands and Canada geese nest here. In winter, look for woodland caribou.

Highlights:

- brook trout and rainbow trout in stocked waters
- remains of a trading post built and operated by Pierre Grey in the late 1800s
- great bird and wildlife watching
- 15 km of groomed cross-country ski and hiking trails

The scenery around Pierre Grey's Lakes Recreation Area is a photographers dream. Government of Alberta

This landscape is typical of William A. Switzer. Government of Alberta

Crimson Lake Provincial Park

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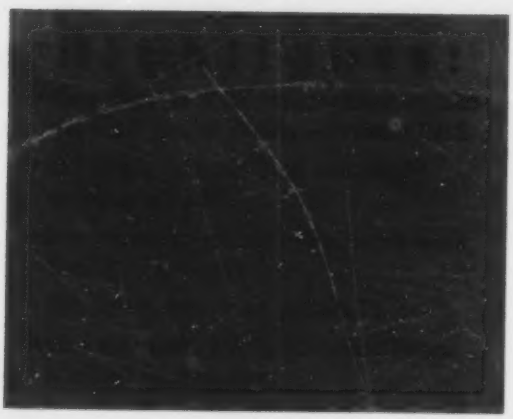

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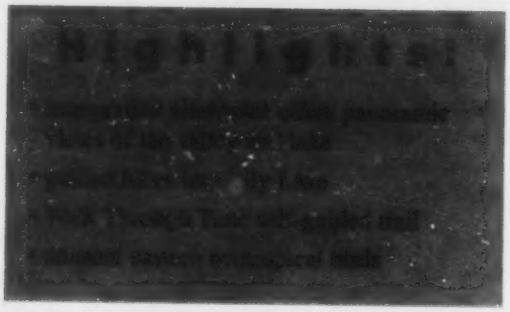

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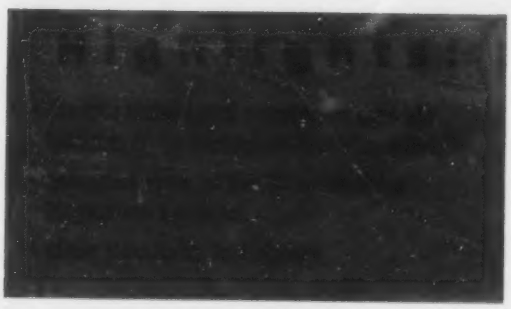

You may spot a cougar at Brown-Lowery Provincial Park; Government of Alberta

Upper Foothills Subregion

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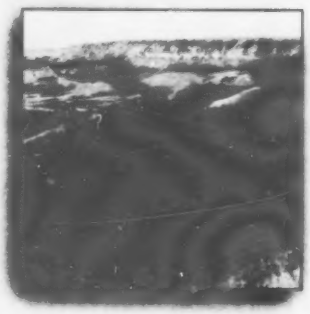
PARKLAND NATURAL REGION



Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park is a mosaic of flora and fauna; Terry Krause

The **Parkland Natural Region** is the transition area between the grasslands of the southeast and the boreal forests to the north. In Canada, this natural region is found only in the prairie provinces. The Parkland Natural Region is divided into three subregions, **Central Parkland**, **Foothills Parkland** and **Peace River Parkland**, based on geographic location and differences in plant communities.

The types of wildlife you are likely to see in this natural region depend, in part, on its neighbours. In the south, the **Parkland Natural Region** shares wildlife with the grasslands, to the west with the foothills, and in the north with the boreal forest.

The **Peace River Parkland** is an island surrounded by boreal forest. Deep, rich soils and plenty of wetlands and waterways make this a highly productive agricultural area. Most of the landscape is cultivated, and native vegetation is scarce but the lakes and ponds provide a major nesting area for the rare trumpeter swan.

Historically, Albertans have played in and around lakes in the Parkland at several provincial parks and recreation areas.

Red-tailed hawk, a common sight in the Central Parkland Subregion; Government of Alberta

Coyote; Cleve Wershler

Saskatoon Island Provincial Park, in the Peace River Parkland Subregion, is the most northerly park preserving this type of habitat; Government of Alberta

Parkland Natural Region is typified by extensive aspen forests.
Government of Alberta

Central Parkland Subregion

Dwarfed aspen trees are a result of the windy, warm, dry climate and sandy soils of Dillberry Provincial Park; Government of Alberta

Dillberry Lake Provincial Park

About an hour south of Lloydminster, Dillberry Lake Provincial Park, is one of Alberta's best kept secrets and a great family destination.

After crossing bare prairie, you'll discover a small sandy lake surrounded by willow and poplar stands. These aspen have adapted well to growing on sand dunes in a warm, dry climate. They have grown low to the ground, escaping some of the drying effects of the wind. Their dwarfed shapes lend an air of mystery, like an enchanted forest.

The lake is a glistening freshwater treat in a region of alkaline lakes and supports yellow perch and rainbow trout. Both mule deer and white tailed deer are common here, as are coyotes, beavers and ground squirrels. Wetlands and shoreline habitats are key to wildlife survival in this dry region.

Trails throughout the park allow walkers and cyclists to explore Dillberry and other small lakes. During June, watch for the colourful blooms of the prickly pear cactus on the sunny, sandy hillsides. After building the castle of your dreams on the beach, launch your canoe and paddle along the shoreline to spot ducks in the numerous marshes.

Dillberry Lake Provincial Park is an excellent family destination; Government of Alberta

Willow and poplar trees help to stabilize the fragile sand dunes; Government of Alberta

Highlights:

- excellent family destination
- sand dunes and refreshing lake waters
- strange, dwarf trees
- hiking, cycling and canoeing

Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park

A flat-topped mesa called a "dry island" rises 200 metres above the Red Deer River. In the distance, you can see the grassy clifftop of an ancient buffalo jump. Its easy to picture tall teepees and, nearby, a group of natives processing buffalo hides and meat. Historically natives here hunted bison by stampeding them over these high cliffs. Hunting this way provided enough meat, skins and other products to sustain a group of natives sometimes for an entire winter.

Today, in this river valley picnic area, you'll find aspen alongside white spruce, desert-like badlands next to undisturbed prairie grassland. Search for an interesting variety of wildlife and plants on well-travelled game trails then relax in the shade of mature cottonwoods.

The flat-topped mesa, called a "dry island", rises 200 metres above the Red Deer River; Terry Krause

Highlights:

- the most northerly and exceptionally high buffalo jump of 45 metres is over 3000 years old
- Badlands, Aspen Parkland, Grasslands and white spruce forest
- over 400 species of flowering plants, 148 species of birds and at least 84 species of fish, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals
- spot turkey vultures and prairie falcons

Buffalo bones, evidence of a fascinating past; Government of Alberta

A visit to Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park is rewarded by exceptional views of the surrounding landscape; Government of Alberta

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A visit to Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park is rewarded by exceptional views of the surrounding landscape; Government of Alberta

Aspen poplar line the rolling river valley of Vermilion Provincial Park. Government of Alberta

Vermilion Provincial Park

Just minutes away from the town of Vermilion, you can explore 767 hectares of Aspen Parkland. Families and nature enthusiasts enjoy walking along the many trails to watch for great blue heron, Richardson's ground squirrel, deer or Swainson's hawk. Look for fairy bell, rose and other wildflowers growing in forests of aspen, balsam poplar and introduced white spruce.

Highlights:

- a stocked trout pond
- 16 kms of hiking, biking and cross-country ski trails
- school environmental education programs

Beaverhill Natural Area

Each spring bird enthusiasts watch in awe as huge feathery white clouds appear and noisily descend on Beaverhill Lake. This annual arrival of the snow goose is awaited with great excitement and anticipation.

Beaverhill Natural Area was established to protect the rich marshes that provide precious habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds. This is a birder's paradise.

Highlights:

- internationally recognized as a resting area for hundreds of thousands of migrating birds
- home of the April snow goose festival
- location of the Beaverhill Bird Observatory

J.J. Collett Natural Area

In the rolling hills of central Alberta, J.J. Collett Natural Area provides a quiet retreat.

Among these shady forested hillsides, wetlands and sunny grasslands, sand dunes have struggled for years to stabilize against the elements. A thin vegetative cover is all that keeps these stable dunes from reverting back to bare, shifting sand. When visiting the area take care not to disturb this fragile protection.

Highlights:

- excellent setting for orienteering, nature observation and plant and wildlife studies
- mosaic of shrublands, aspen stands and meadows typical of the Aspen Parkland
- trail network

Central Parkland Subregion

Wagner is internationally recognized for its orchids; Government of Alberta

An interpretive trail winds through the woods at Wagner Bog Natural Area; Government of Alberta

Wagner Natural Area

The Wagner Natural Area near Edmonton is a naturalist's treasure of peatland, wetland, black spruce and mixed forest. Explore this area along the self-guided Marl Pond Trail on the edge of a sensitive wetland.

Visit in every season. In autumn the golden needles of the larch reflect in the marl ponds. Winter is a tranquil time when signs of wildlife are easier to see and the arrival of spring is signalled by the musical din of songbirds and mating frogs.

Highlights:

- internationally recognized because of the variety of orchids and carnivorous plants
- natural spring waters create calcium rich marl pond
- self-guided interpretive trail
- close to Edmonton

Big Knife Provincial Park

As you drop into the Battle River Valley, your first view is of badlands and grassland, but take a closer look: an old forest of spruce and cottonwood lines Big Knife Creek.

Walk along one of the trails through grassy open flats dotted with bright gaillardia or through groves of young aspen mixed with saskatoon, silverberry and wild rose. Explore the forest where great horned owl make their homes. You might even catch a fleeting glimpse of a deer grazing near your path.

Highlights:

- mosaic of landscapes
- marshes provide habitat for great blue heron, white pelican, and other water birds
- remains of bootlegger's cabin

Aspen poplar line the rolling river valley of Vermilion Provincial Park; Government of Alberta

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Saskatoon Island Provincial Park

In spring, saskatoon bushes are covered with white fragrant blossoms; in summer, with the sweet purple berries. Saskatoon Island Provincial Park has been and still is a favourite berry picking spot with the people of the Peace River region.

At higher water levels prior to the 1920s, this park was an island. Now, it sits on a neck of land between two small shallow lakes, Saskatoon Lake and Little Lake. The lakes provide excellent habitat for many bird species and important migratory bird nesting and staging areas. From a viewing platform, you can see trumpeter swan and other waterfowl, as well as beaver.

Camping, hiking, birdwatching and water sports are popular activities and in winter, you can skate and cross-country ski.

Highlights:

- the rare trumpeter swan nest on Little Lake
- great saskatoon berry picking
- one of the first provincial parks in Alberta

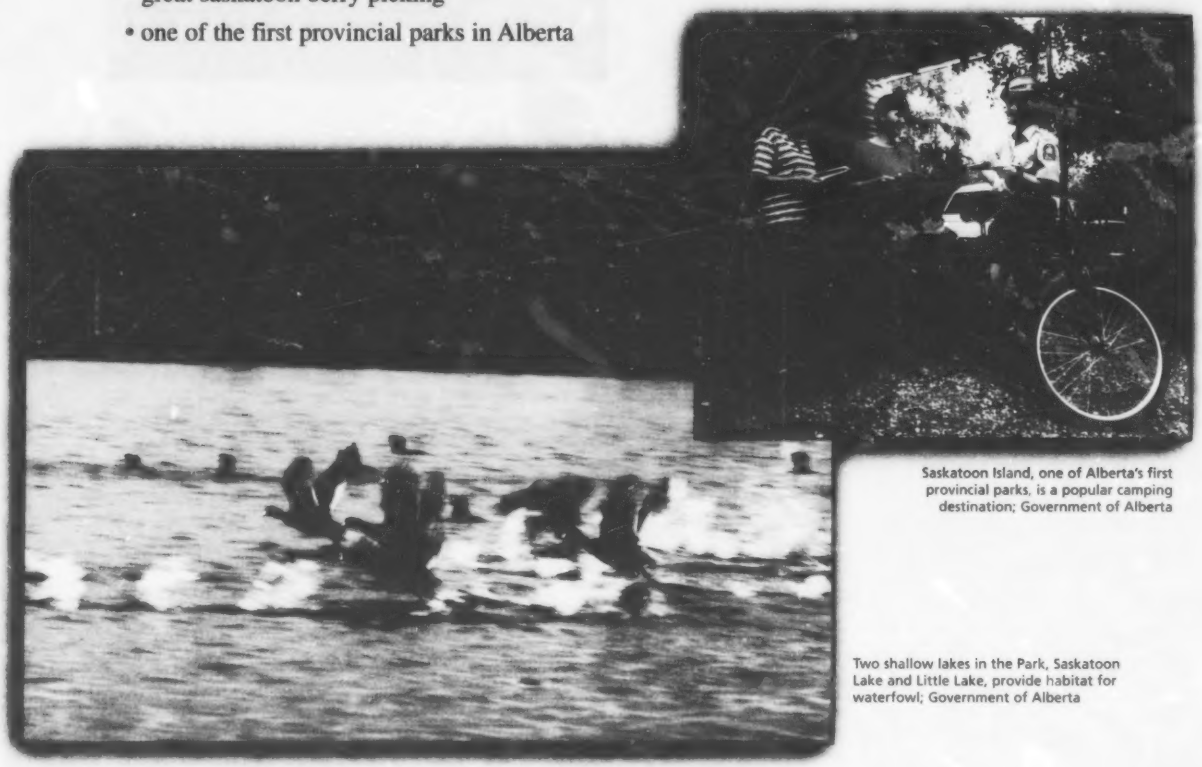
Kleskun Hill Natural Area

Since the early 1900s, grainfields have largely replaced the natural grasslands in the Peace River Parkland leaving only scattered examples. Kleskun Hill, 100 metres above the plains surrounding Grande Prairie, protects one of the largest areas remaining of native upland vegetation.

You can take in the scenic vistas from this high vantage point, or wander among the hills where you'll see coloured rock layers, the sediments from prehistoric lakes and seas.

Highlights:

- the most northerly location of badlands in Alberta
- one of the most diverse and extensive areas of native upland vegetation remaining in the Peace River Parkland



Saskatoon Island, one of Alberta's first provincial parks, is a popular camping destination; Government of Alberta

Two shallow lakes in the Park, Saskatoon Lake and Little Lake, provide habitat for waterfowl; Government of Alberta

Alberta's Watchable Wildlife

When was the last time you stopped by the side of the road to watch a deer or a moose? Perhaps you enjoy watching birds, or even fish?

More and more people head into the outdoors each year, just to watch wildlife. In fact, this is one of the fastest growing forms of outdoor recreation in North America. It's a fun way to get out, experience nature and get some exercise. But sometimes it's difficult to find a good wildlife watching area, or to find a new one.

We have identified wildlife watching areas around the province to make them a little easier to find. Parks and protected areas are a great place to start. Many sites are identified on major roadways by a Wildlife Watching sign. These sites vary in accessibility, location and facilities. A Wildlife Viewing Guide, available at local bookstores, provides information about more than 60 wildlife viewing sites across the province. It includes where to go, what to look for and tips on how to view and photograph wildlife in an ethically responsible manner. This information is also available on the Internet at http://www.gov.ab.ca/env/env/wil.life/view

Wildlife Watching Tips

Successful watching requires certain skills and knowledge. Here are a few tips.

- Go to an area where you are likely to see wildlife (e.g. parks, near water or feeding areas).
- Going out in the morning or near dusk are best.
- Be patient and quiet.
- Try to become invisible by not moving and by wearing muted clothing.
- Use all of your senses.
- Read wildlife signs like tracks and droppings.
- Use appropriate viewing guides and equipment.
- Use a field notebook to record your sightings.

For more information on specific viewing opportunities or the program in general, please contact your nearest Natural Resources Service office.

Foothills Parkland Subregion

Police Outpost Provincial Park lies at the base of the sacred Chief Mountain; B. Danielson

Police Outpost Provincial Park and Outpost Wetlands Natural Area

Once home to a North West Mounted Police post established to control whisky smuggling into Canada, this park is one of the few protected areas that has both Fescue Parkland and Foothills Fescue vegetation. Plant seekers will find at least 400 different plants including several rare species in the wetlands and grasslands.

Chief Mountain towers over several kilometres of hiking trails where deer, coyote, elk and bears can be spotted. Around the lake, aspens, shrubs and marshy wetlands sustain a thriving bird and wildlife community. Drop your line into Outpost Lake to catch a rainbow trout.

Nearby, the Outpost Wetlands Natural Area combines wetland with aspen forest and meadows where mountain bluebird, loons, American goldfinch and moose make their homes. You might even see a rare blue flag or a sandhill crane.

Highlights:

- rare plant species of the fescue grasslands and wetlands
- excellent vantage point to view sacred Chief Mountain
- site of the marking of the Canada-US boundary in the 1870s
- interpretive trail
- hiking and cross-country skiing

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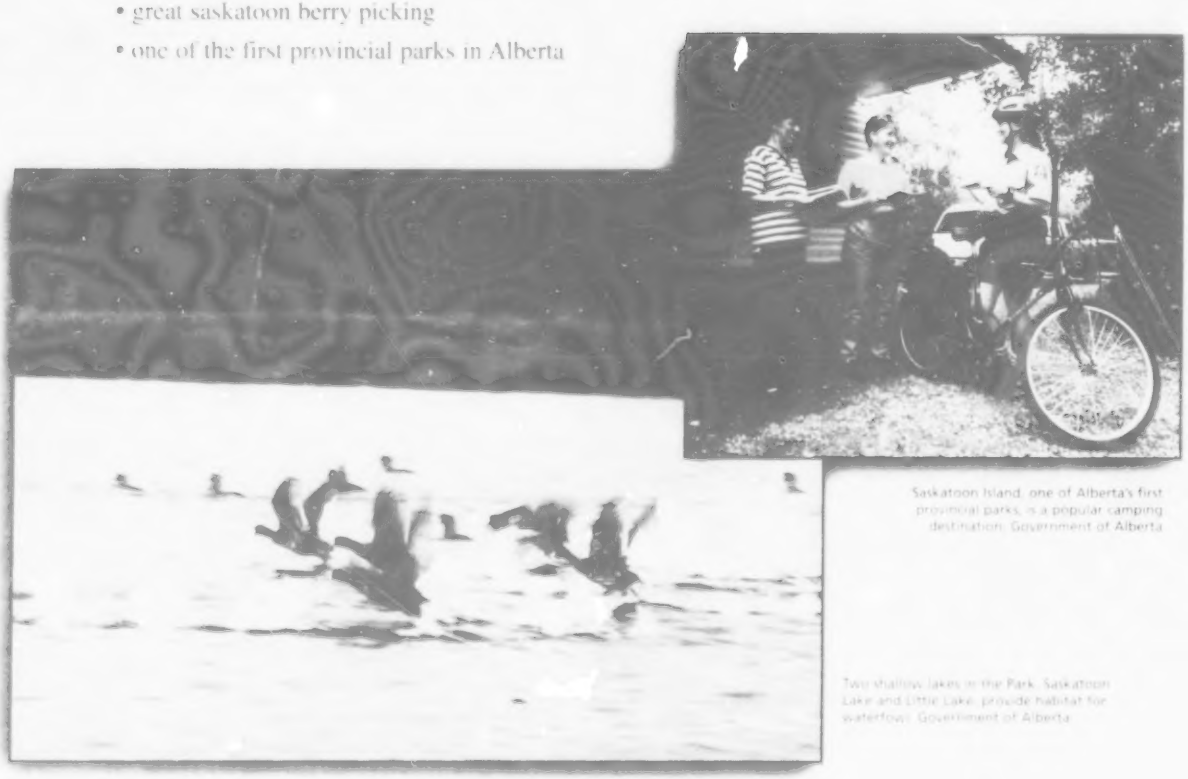

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Chain Lakes Provincial Park

Chain Lakes Provincial Park is 500 hectares of willow, aspen and grassland in the Willow Creek Valley west of Nanton.

Wildlife watching here is unbeatable! The park attracts moose, deer, elk, bear and cougar as well as white pelican, osprey, cormorant, great blue heron, kingfisher, short-eared owl and wild turkey, to name just a few! The wetlands and surrounding grasslands abound with over 260 different plants. Grass fires are always a danger so open fires are not allowed.

Highlights:

- year-round fishing for rainbow trout
- excellent wildlife watching
- a forested oasis amid the rolling grasslands
- tremendous views of the Rockies

Big Hill Springs Provincial Park

Tucked into the rolling terrain of the foothills, this picnic area is something of a surprise. Visitors for the day arrive at a grassy meadow where occasional aspens give shade for picnic lunches. But a little effort reveals a delightful wonder. Follow a bubbling stream and an interpretive trail up the forested hillside and explore this oasis.

Highlights:

- a self-guided interpretive trail tells the rich cultural and natural history of the Big Hill Springs
- bubbling stream in a beautiful foothills setting

The falls on Springs Creek, Big Hill Springs Provincial Park, Government of Alberta

An interpretive trail along the creek makes for a pleasant walk, D. Traweek

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The falls on Springs Creek, Big Hill Springs Provincial Park; Government of Alberta

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5

BOREAL FOREST NATURAL REGION

Labrador tea grows in the poorly drained bogs of the Boreal Forest Subarctic Subregion; S. Andrews

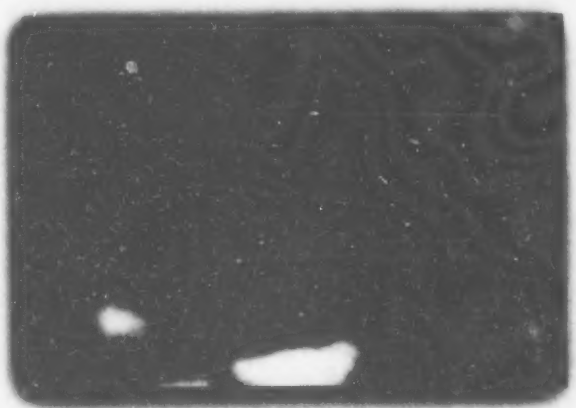
The Boreal Forest Natural Region is Alberta's largest, covering 60% of the province. Its diversity is evident in six subregions: the **Dry Mixedwood**, **Central Mixedwood**, **Wetland Mixedwood**, **Boreal Highlands**, **Peace River Lowlands** and **Subarctic**. The most common characteristic of all subregions is extensive wetlands. Generally, bedrock is deeply buried under glacial deposits and the terrain is relatively flat with scattered groups of hills. In certain areas other features exist such as dunes, hills, plateaux, river floodplains and deltas.

The Boreal Forest Natural Region covers 35% of Canada. It is the largest forested natural region in the world and stretches across much of Canada, northern Europe, northern China and Russia. Its contribution to the global environment through its absorption of carbon dioxide, other gases and chemicals and its production of oxygen, has earned it the nickname "lungs of the planet".

The differences between the subregions in the Boreal Forest Natural Region are often subtle. The **Dry Mixedwood Subregion** stretches north from the Parkland Natural Region. Its flat and gently rolling terrain is covered in mixed stands of aspen and white spruce, with balsam poplar in low, wet areas and balsam fir in its northern regions. Wetlands dot this patchwork. The rich mix of habitats attracts both parkland and boreal forest species. Typical mammals include moose, snowshoe hare, lynx and weasel.

The **Central Mixedwood Subregion** is the largest subregion in Alberta. You'll find many of the same plant species here as in the Dry Mixedwood Subregion, only in different proportions. One reason to visit this area is the bountiful wildlife. Walk through the forests and shrublands near swamps and lakes and you'll see the greatest variety: moose, beaver, snowshoe hare, black bear, lynx, wolf, least chipmunk, ermine, and in some locations, fisher, woodland caribou, wolverine and river otter. Birds include nuthatches, gray jay, pine siskin, crossbills, chickadees and warblers.

To experience a 6 month long winter, visit the **Wetland Mixedwood Subregion**, where the length of snow cover is one of the longest in the province. Between the snow and the rains of summer, moisture is the dominant trait of this area. While aspen, balsam, spruce and fir all grow here, wetlands cover more area with peatlands, willow-sedge wetlands and black spruce bogs. The lack of extensive forests keeps wildlife numbers low, however, waterfowl, including sandhill crane and rare whooping crane, and mosquitoes are abundant.



The Boreal Forest provides important habitat for a variety of wildlife, including moose; Government of Alberta

Tamarack and black spruce indicate moisture found below.
Government of Alberta

The **Boreal Highlands Subregion** covers plateaux and hills within the Central Mixedwood and Wetland Mixedwood subregions with coniferous forests and some poplar. Jack pine grows in dry upland sites. Bogs, fens and lakes are common and host a variety of nesting and migrating waterfowl. Wildlife is similar to that of the Central Mixedwood Subregion.

The tops of the Birch Mountains, Caribou Mountains and Cameron Hills are part of the **Subarctic Subregion**. This region most closely resembles parts of the Northwest Territories. Black spruce is the most common tree, growing alongside Labrador tea and lichen in poorly drained acidic bogs. Permafrost is common and influences the formation of palsas and peat plateaux. The harsh environment and the scarcity of poplar forests keeps wildlife away. Only red squirrel, snowshoe hare, moose, black bear and woodland caribou are common. Birds however, manage to find all they need for survival and the brave birdwatcher will see a great variety including warblers, surf scoter, loons and bald eagle.

In sharp contrast, the **Peace River Lowlands Subregion** extends along the Peace, Birch and Athabasca rivers and the Peace-Athabasca Delta. White spruce and jack pine dominate. Much of the area is wet, with periodic flooding of the rivers creating a mosaic of marshes, wet meadows and shrublands along their shores and in the delta. This patchwork of wetlands and drier upland forests attracts a rich wildlife population including wood bison, white pelican, muskrat, tundra swan and ducks. Some animals, like the round whitefish and short-jawed cisco, are found nowhere else in Alberta.

Willow-sedge wetlands are common in the Wetland Mixedwood Subregion; D. Dodge

Jack pine grows in dry upland sites in the Boreal Highlands Subregion; C. Bradley

Boreal owl; Government of Alberta

Whitney Lakes Provincial Park

Recreate the kind of family vacation you remember as a child – lazy days on the beach, hours spent exploring trails and evenings around the campfire. On sunny summer afternoons, the white sand beaches of Whitney and Ross lakes are dotted with sun seekers and sand castles. Nature trails take hikers through cool stands of jack pine and spruce or across open grasslands. For those who really want to escape, head off the beaten track to Borden Lake and while away the afternoon adrift in your canoe.

The terrain here rolls, with valleys filled by brilliant blue lakes. The wetlands and forests of pine, white spruce, aspen, birch and willow attract deer, moose, beaver, red squirrel, flying squirrel and a variety of songbirds and waterfowl. Take a walk along the Ross Lake Interpretive Trail and learn more about this forest community.

The Whitney Lakes region is steeped in history. Follow the historic Carlton Trail along the park's southern edge, or trace the events of the Northwest Rebellion at nearby Frog Lake. At Elk Point, an interpretive centre tells the story of two rivals – the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company. It's here you can feel a link to the places and events that made Canadian history.

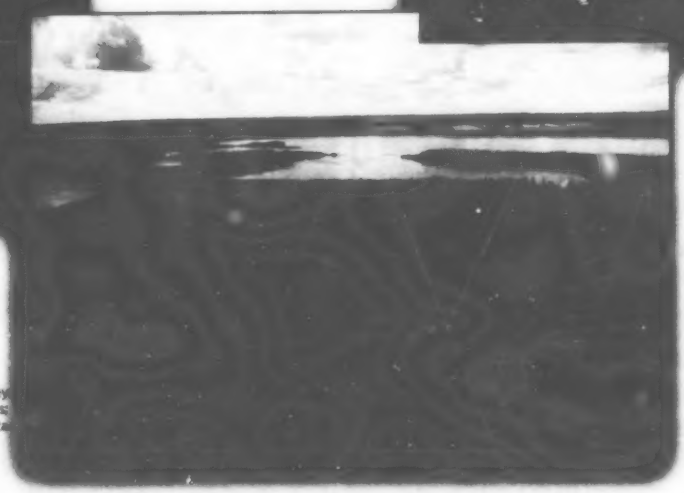
Highlights:

- surrounded by Western Canadian history
- canoeing, fishing and boating
- extensive hiking and biking trails
- white sand beaches
- nearby Fort George-Buckingham House Interpretive Centre

Ft. George-Buckingham House Interpretive Centre tells the story of a rich cultural history; Government of Alberta

Interpretive trails allow you to explore the vastness of the Boreal forest; Government of Alberta

Boating is a popular activity at Whitney Lakes Provincial Park; Government of Alberta



Aerial view of Whitney and Ross Lakes; Government of Alberta

Picnic site on the beach at Cold Lake Provincial Park; Government of Alberta

Cold Lake Provincial Park

On a beautiful summer day, a visitor to Cold Lake Provincial Park can wander the lakeshore and watch sailboats skimming across the water. The appeal of this boreal forest park is irresistible, drawing visitors to its towering spruce and pine forests, sandy beaches and northern sunsets. But Cold Lake Provincial Park's greatest treasures have beaks and wings!

The diversity of habitats here provides a home to over 200 species of birds. Despite its name, Cold Lake acts as a large thermal basin, where warm air temperatures keep the lake from freezing over and make it possible to observe many migratory bird species well into December. The boreal forest is the breeding ground for neotropical migrants, making the birdwatching especially inviting in late May to mid-June. Some neotropical migrants that normally spend their summers in eastern Canada visit Cold Lake.

Many visitors find Cold Lake a fishing paradise with trout, northern pike, walleye and yellow perch only four of the 22 fish species found there.

Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park

Just 2 1/2 hours north of Edmonton you'll find white sand beaches, a freshwater ocean called Lesser Slave Lake, kilometres of hiking and cross-country skiing trails, boreal forest wilderness, sand dunes and a neotropical migratory bird research station. Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park is open year-round with special events throughout the seasons, such as the spring Songbird Festival, the Alberta Open Sandcastle Competition, and Christmas in the Park.

The 23 km Freighter Lakeshore Trail is an easy hike that follows a route used by fur traders and gold seekers. Skirting the lake, hikers are treated to spectacular views and a good chance of seeing wildlife. In winter, a snowy wonderland invites beginner and intermediate skiers to try track set cross-country ski trails.

Highlights:
• a "Great Canadian Park" on Discovery Channel
• seven km long white sandy beach, the best beach in Alberta
• migratory bird research station
• home of the Alberta Open Sandcastle Competion
• interpretive programs, environmental education programs and year-round special events
• breathtaking views from Marten Mountain

The Alberta Open Sandcastle Competition at Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park; June Markwart

Dry Mixedwood Subregion

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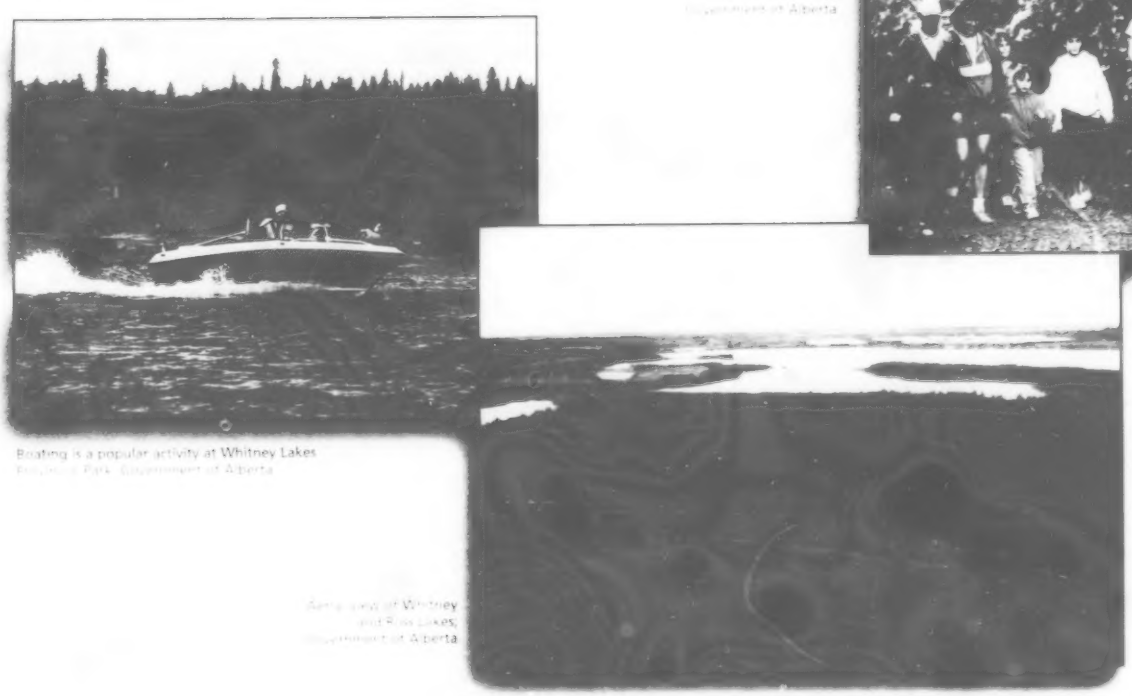

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Highlights:

- one of Alberta's largest and cleanest freshwater lakes
- home to over 200 bird species
- interpretive viewpoints offer panoramic views of the park and its inhabitants
- great fishing

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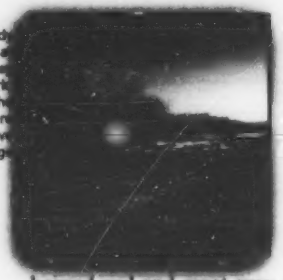
- interpretive programs, environmental education programs and year-round special events
- breathtaking views from Marten Mountain



Explore the sandy white beach at Hilliard's Bay Provincial Park located on the northwest shore of Lesser Slave Lake. D. Dodge

Hilliard's Bay Provincial Park

White sand beaches, thick forest and plentiful wildlife: this is Hilliard's Bay. An important nesting area for great horned owl and great gray owl, you can watch bald eagle soar above the trees and over the sparkling waters of Lesser Slave Lake. In fact, the north shore of Lesser Slave Lake contains the highest density of bald eagle's nests east of the Rocky Mountains.

Beautiful beaches are perfect for swimming and waterside activities the entire family will fondly remember. Hike along secluded trails, canoe the shoreline or sleep under the towering spruce and pine.

Highlights:

- bald eagles soar overhead
- white sand beaches
- Boreal Forest Interpretive Trail

Pond on the west bank of the Peace River, Notikewin Provincial Park; C. Bradley

Notikewin Provincial Park

Cradled in a dramatic 150 metre deep valley created by the Peace and Notikewin rivers, this excellent representative of the boreal forest holds a patchwork of forest types, wetlands and grassy meadows. Numerous plants thrive, including the unusual ostrich fern and joe-pye weed. Warblers, pileated woodpecker, barred owl, moose, bear and other wildlife make their homes here.

A rich history includes aboriginal battles, famous explorers, rival fur trade companies, and steamboat travel.

Highlights:

Sir Winston Churchill Provincial Park

This island park, circled by white sand beaches, juts into Lac la Biche. Trails wind their way from one end of the island to the other through moss-covered old growth forest, past spring orchids and summer's raspberries.

Birdwatchers come to find wood warblers and other songbirds. At Pelican Viewpoint, a telescope and recorded presentation introduce the pelican and cormorant that inhabit the rocky islands just off shore.

Highlights:

- spectacular birdwatching
- double crested cormorant, white pelican and western grebe nest here
- variety of interpretive programs
- near Lac la Biche Mission Historic Site

Long Lake Provincial Park

Long Lake is a spectacular remnant of the last ice age some 10,000 years ago. The steep and irregular terrain of the glacial meltwater channel harbours poplar forests, jack pine, black spruce and willow sedge bogs. These rough treed slopes and gullies are some of the most productive moose habitat in Alberta.

Hikers and explorers enjoy the lakeside trail that hugs the shore and offers excellent views. Facilities provide comforts for boaters, anglers and other water sport enthusiasts.

Highlights:

- excellent family destination
- water sports, hiking and wildlife watching
- located in one of the largest glacial meltwater channels in Alberta

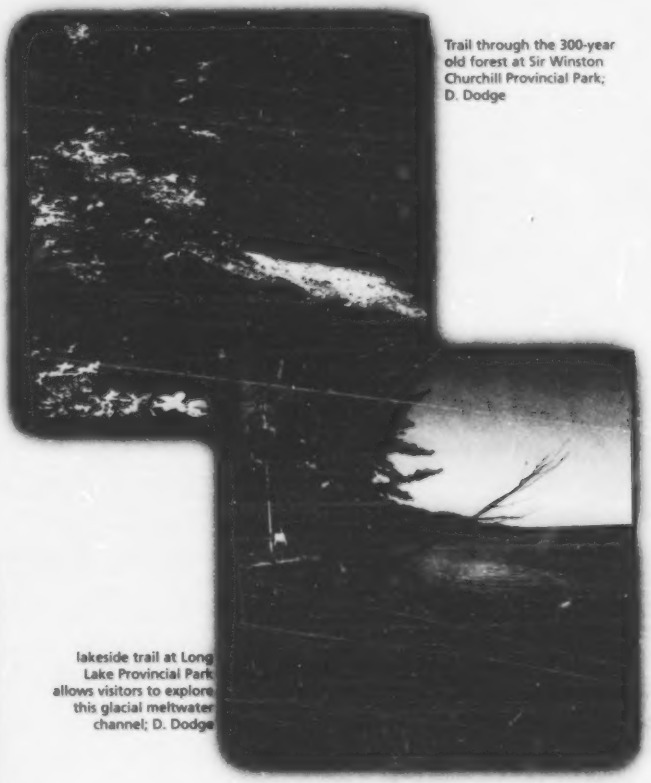
Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area

From the top of Saskatoon Mountain, 150 m above the surrounding lands, visitors can see the Rockies. A forest of white spruce, poplar and white birch is interspersed with wetlands bordered by alder and willow. Surrounded by land that has been cultivated for many years, Saskatoon Mountain Natural Area is a haven for wildlife. Forty-six bird species have been seen. Red squirrel, moose, mule deer and snowshoe hare also make their homes here.

Evidence shows that people lived here 9500 years ago after travelling along the ice free corridor from northern Asia to North America during the last ice age.

Highlights:

- highest point of land in the area
- view of valleys, forests and wetlands in northern Alberta
- great wildlife watching



Trail through the 300-year old forest at Sir Winston Churchill Provincial Park; D. Dodge

lakeside trail at Long Lake Provincial Park allows visitors to explore this glacial meltwater channel; D. Dodge

Hilliard's Bay Provincial Park

Highlights:

- bald eagles soar overhead
- white sand beaches
- Boreal Forest Interpretive Trail

Notikewin Provincial Park

Highlights:

- ammonite beds are evidence of the warm marine climate of an earlier age
- adventure and wilderness abound in this rugged, boreal forest terrain
- views of deep river valley

There Are Bears Out There!

Remember, when travelling in forested areas, you are in bear country.

Bears are most active at night, so you are unlikely to see a bear during your visit. Bears investigate campgrounds for food and garbage left on picnic tables, in tents, poured into fire pits but not burned and left in coolers outside. Bears accustomed to prowling the campground and finding food lose their fear of people. They may not hurt you, but they might hurt the next person camping at your site.

When you are in bear country, pick up and read the brochures and heed all warnings. The information may save you, and the next visitor, much trouble and pain. Report all bear sightings to park staff.

Here are just a few of the things you can do to be safe in bear country.

In Campgrounds

- Always store food out of reach of bears. Never store food in a tent or tent-trailer where you are sleeping and never cook or eat in or near your tent.
- Do not burn or bury food scraps; do not litter. Place all garbage in suitable containers provided in campgrounds.

In the Backcountry

- While hiking, make noise, talk loudly or sing. This will alert bears of your approach so that you don't surprise them. Be especially careful in dense brush or forest and near running water.
- Cook away from the campsite; wash cooking equipment immediately and dispose of the dishwater at least 100 metres from the campsite. Clothes worn when cooking should be kept in plastic bags, preferably stored away from the campsite.
- Hang food from a tree branch, well away from your campsite.

If you encounter a bear, there are no hard and fast rules. Bears react to humans in different ways in different situations. Talk quietly and slowly back away; give the bear enough time and room to leave on its own. If the bear continues to move toward you, drop your backpack or other belongings - this may distract the bear.

If you are planning a trip into bear country and would like to have information sent to you in advance, call the Alberta Environmental Information Centre.

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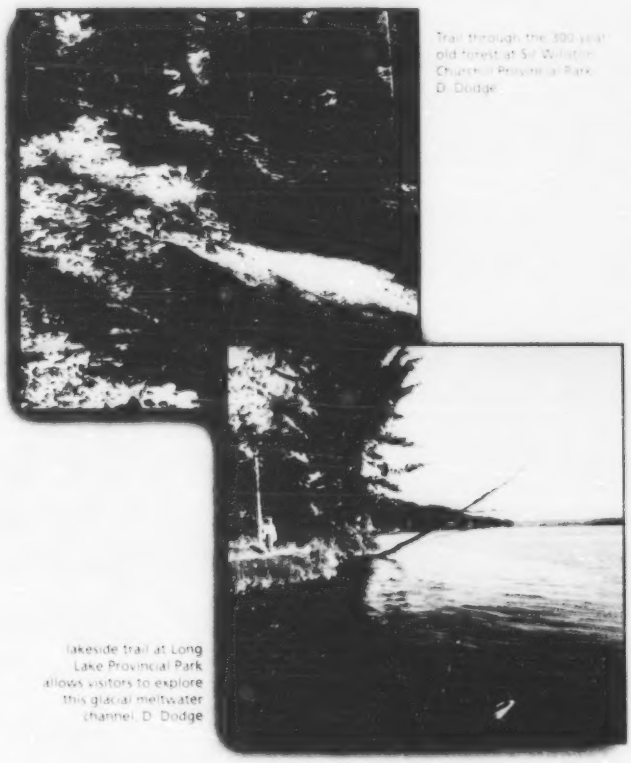
Evidence shows that people lived here 9500 years ago after travelling along the ice free corridor from northern Asia to North America during the last ice age.

Highlights:

- highest point of land in the area
- site of earliest human habitation in northern Alberta
- good wildlife watching



Trail through the 300 year old forest at Sir Winston Churchill Provincial Park. D. Dodge

Lakeside trail at Long Lake Provincial Park allows visitors to explore this glacial meltwater channel. D. Dodge

Lakeland Provincial Park and Provincial Recreation Area

Just east of Lac La Biche, a two lane road wanders through tall spruce and aspen into the heart of lake country. Almost 600 square kilometres of boreal mixedwood and old growth forest are protected within Lakeland Provincial Park and Provincial Recreation Area.

And for good reason! The scenery is spectacular. The lakes are clear and quiet. And the wildlife is abundant.

Lakeland boasts over eleven lakes, with Jackson, Blackett, Dabbs and Kinnaird offering backcountry canoeing. Enjoy this peaceful solitude, take in the scenery and watch wildlife. Camp on the islands where you can relax on secluded sandy beaches.

Try a different trail year-round — for hiking and mountain biking in summer and cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and access to ice fishing in winter.

Highlights:

- extensive year-round trail network
- a backcountry canoe circuit
- hundreds of loons on Touchwood Lake
- fourteen varieties of wild orchids, two are rare

Cross Lake Provincial Park

Cross Lake Provincial Park protects an abundance of black spruce bogs, fens and marshy wetlands interspersed among stands of pine, white spruce, mature poplar and mixedwood areas. You'll get a glimpse of a mule deer and perhaps a white tail deer, moose or black bear. Smaller animals like beaver, hare and red squirrel are abundant. The lake supports a multitude of waterfowl including loons and nesting pairs of osprey and bald eagle.

Extensive hiking trails pass through the different forest landscapes that skirt the wetlands. Dusk and nightfall bring the lonesome calls of the loon and the singing of the coyote.

Highlights:

- a good representative of Alberta's northern boreal forest near Edmonton
- great wildlife watching with bird viewing platforms
- hiking and canoeing

Cross Lake Provincial Park; Government of Alberta

Waterfowl are abundant at Cross Lake Provincial Park; Government of Alberta

Central Mixedwood Subregion

Pembina River Provincial Park

Hugging the banks of the towering Pembina River gorge, the rich habitat of this riverside park supports a large wildlife community. Owls, hawks, grouse, marten, deer, coyote and others may be seen at water's edge or under forest cover.

The river meanders in a wide curve, making this a great place for canoeing. Or walk the interpretive trail through aspen and balsam forest for spectacular views.

Highlights:

- spectacular Pembina River gorge
- Pembina River Gorge Interpretive Trail
- great canoeing
- one of a few provincial parks that use mounted horse patrols

View of the breathtaking Pembina River gorge from Pembina Provincial Park; Government of Alberta

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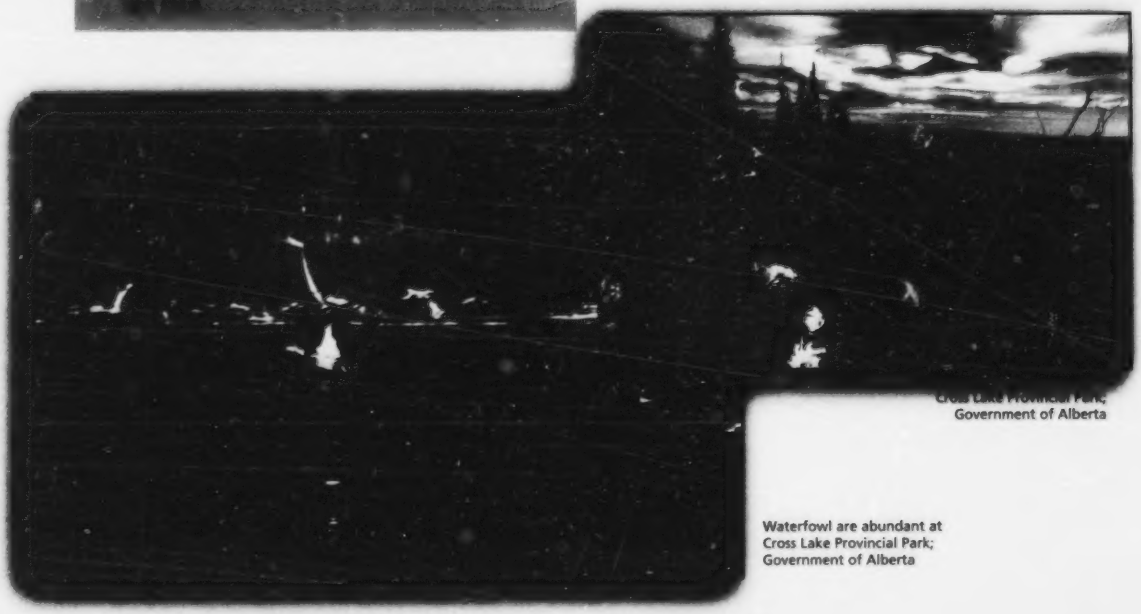

Cross Lake Provincial Park; Government of Alberta

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View of the breathtaking Pembina River gorge from Pembina Provincial Park; Government of Alberta

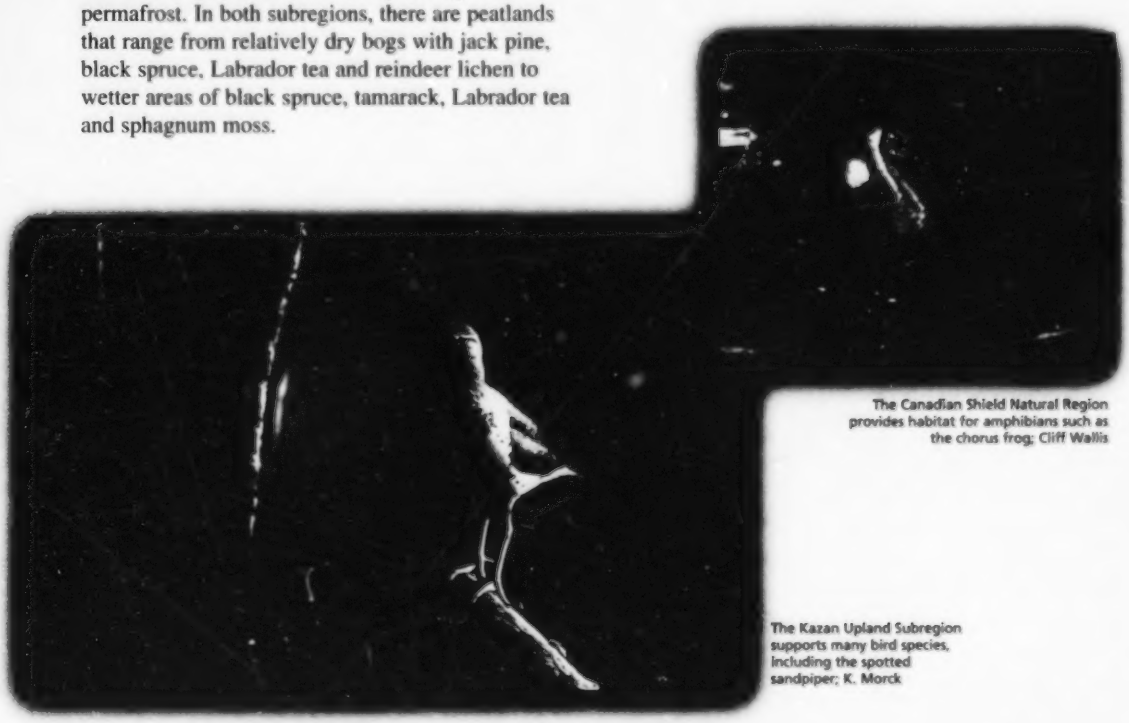
CANADIAN SHIELD

The rare pitcher plant grows in the Shield environment; Government of Alberta

Entering Alberta only in its northeast corner, the **Canadian Shield Natural Region** is the least visited natural region in Alberta. Within this Natural Region are the **Athabasca Plain** and the **Kazan Upland subregions.**

This is a landscape of rock barrens and sand dunes, of peat bogs and permafrost. In both subregions, there are peatlands that range from relatively dry bogs with jack pine, black spruce, Labrador tea and reindeer lichen to wetter areas of black spruce, tamarack, Labrador tea and sphagnum moss.

The **Athabasca Plain Subregion** is an area of superlatives: extensive sandy beaches along Lake Athabasca, some of the largest kames in the world, the biggest active dune network in Alberta and the largest longitudinal dunes in the province. These ancient, stabilized dunes are especially interesting since they run in the opposite direction to the prevailing winds and more recent dunes. Only rivers are small here.



The Canadian Shield Natural Region provides habitat for amphibians such as the chorus frog; Cliff Wallis

The Kazan Upland Subregion supports many bird species, including the spotted sandpiper; K. Morck

Granite cliff at Wylie Lake, located north of Lake Athabasca, Archie Landals

Athabasca Plains Subregion

The environment surrounding Alberta's largest lake, Lake Athabasca, is different from the main uplands. White spruce forests line the lakeshore and jack pine forests grow in sandy areas. Many rare plants, some found nowhere else, grow in this subregion. Sandhill crane and Arctic and Caspian terns are known to breed here.

The **Kazan Upland Subregion** has extensive outcroppings of granitic bedrock. Glacial ice has polished and grooved the rock surfaces. Rockbasin lakes are common and the few rivers are small and slow moving. Vegetation is mostly lichens, sphagnum moss and Labrador tea with some open forests of jack pine on sand plains and rocky hills. Black spruce bogs and peatlands lie in depressions in the landscape. In the jack pine forests, wildlife includes the common nighthawk, gray jay, common raven, boreal chickadee, snowshoe hare, Canada lynx and black bear. In the wetlands and open waters common loon, lesser scaup, bufflehead, Bonaparte's gull, spotted sandpiper, alder flycatcher, rusty blackbird, moose, beaver and mink can be found. Bald eagle and osprey nest near lakes and golden eagle nest high up on cliffs, as do peregrine falcons. The arctic loon is a subarctic species that is known to nest in the area. Willow ptarmigan, barren ground caribou and Arctic fox are found here in winter.

This highly complex and fragile region is relatively untouched, due to its remoteness and inaccessibility. In 1998, three new wildland parks were designated in the Kazan Upland Subregion: Colin-Cornwall Lakes, La Butte Creek and Fidler-Greywillow.

Bald eagles are found in many parts of Alberta, including the Canadian Shield region; June Markwart

Andrew Lake, located in northeastern Alberta, near the Alberta/Northwest Territories border; Archie Landals

Athabasca Dunes Ecological Reserve

Athabasca Dunes Ecological Reserve protects the largest active dune network in the province and the ecology and genetic diversity of this area.

The 16 square km dune field is made up of parallel transverse dunes approximately 12 metres high. Sifting east and southeast up to 1.5 m a year, they fill kettle lakes and other water bodies and cover the forests and more stable dunes in their path.

There are also jack pine forests and bogs where black spruce, tamarack, Labrador tea and pitcher plants grow. Significant plants here include American dune grass, bladderwort, tansy, rush and starwort.

Red squirrel are common. Beaver, muskrat, black bear, red fox, lynx, wolf, moose, river otter and mink also frequent the area. The small lakes that dot the region have nesting loons and other birds including common tern, nighthawk, willow ptarmigan, Bonaparte's gull and greater yellowlegs.

Egg Island Ecological Reserve

This tiny island in Lake Athabasca is a major breeding grounds for the Caspian tern. These birds probably have nested here since the turn of the century. Other species found here include large numbers of California gull, arctic tern and the parasitic jaeger.

Egg Island is made up of gravelled terraces and ridges and rises only about two metres at its highest point. Its windward side is quite bare, while on the leeward side gooseberry, willow, raspberry, aspen and balsam poplar provide some cover. Fireweed, nettle, cinquefoil, goosefoot and bluegrass are other plants noted on the island.

The island is remote and difficult to reach and because of its importance as a breeding area for Caspian tern, any visit must be timed to avoid the nesting season. Research is an important aspect of Ecological Reserves, and this area has been the subject of census and monitoring activities.

The biggest active dune network in Alberta is located in the Canadian Shield Natural Region (Athabasca Dunes Ecological Reserve); Archie Landals

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Highlights:

- **kames over 60 metres high are among the largest in the world**
- **largest active sand dunes in Alberta**

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Highlights:

- **The only consistent nesting site in Alberta for the rare Caspian tern**

The biggest active dune network in Alberta is located in the Canadian Shield Natural Region (Athabasca Dunes Ecological Reserve). Archie Landals

Outdoor Classrooms

Alberta's Outdoor Classrooms

Alberta's parks and protected areas are ideal outdoor classrooms; James Martin

Wildlife "checklists" are available at many parks and protected areas to help visitors identify the species they see; Government of Alberta

Where should you go to find out more about a great horned owl, a lodgepole pine, a dinosaur fossil or a natural region? Well, you could go to a library or surf the Net. Or, you could take a trip to your nearest park or protected area and hear an owl, smell a pine or touch a fossil.

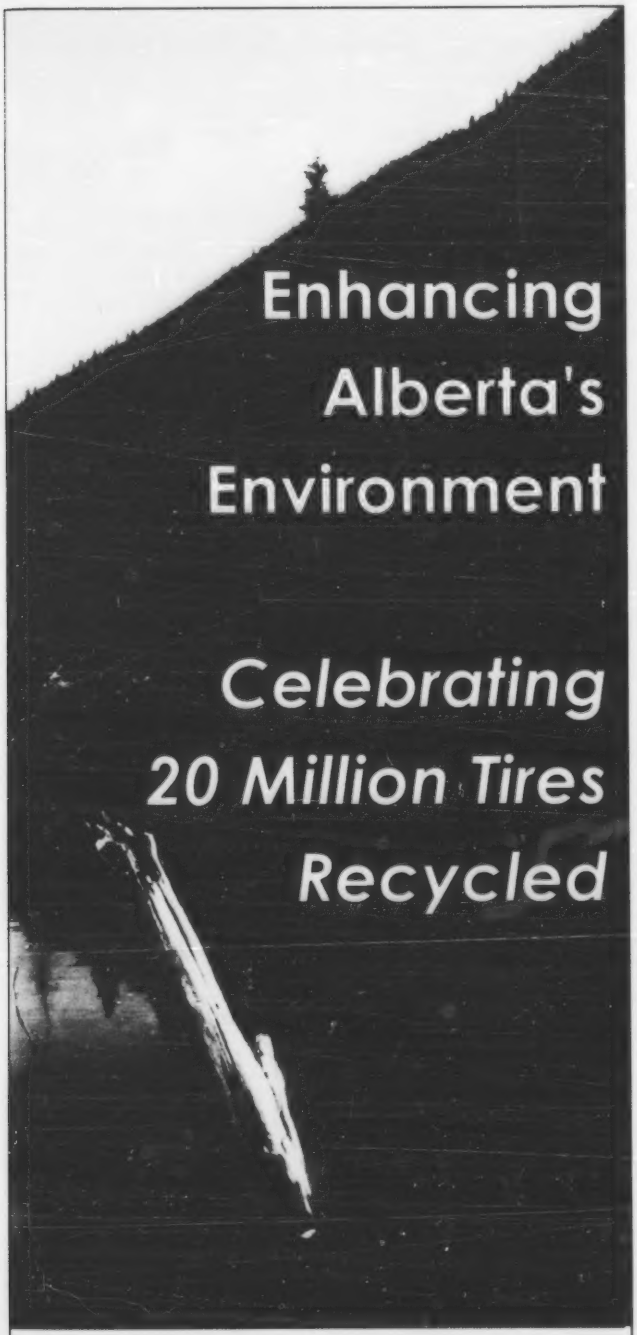
Parks and protected areas are natural classrooms where you can learn about nature or history through firsthand experience. You can explore on your own, borrow a Discovery or Family Adventure Pack full of activities and field guides or take part in a guided walk or an evening amphitheatre program. Visit park interpretive centres to find interesting displays and programs. Follow an interpretive trail where signs or a booklet will tell you about the area you are passing through. Read a park newspaper to find out about the park you're visiting, special events and programs and about neighbouring parks. Stop in at the "Friends of the Park" bookstore in Cypress Hills, Dinosaur and other provincial parks for the latest read on everything from wild orchids to wild landscapes.

Come with a group, your family, friends or class. Some parks have group facilities and offer environmental education programs for special groups.

And who knows, soon you'll be able to answer those all important questions like How many creatures live in a handful of soil? or What is the connection between a lodgepole pine, a woodpecker and a bark beetle? or Is that deer a buck or a doe? or Why is it important to have Special Places protected in Alberta?

Find out more about our environmental education and interpretation activities by calling the park nearest you or by checking out our web site.

Children can learn about nature first-hand in Alberta's "outdoor classrooms"; Government of Alberta



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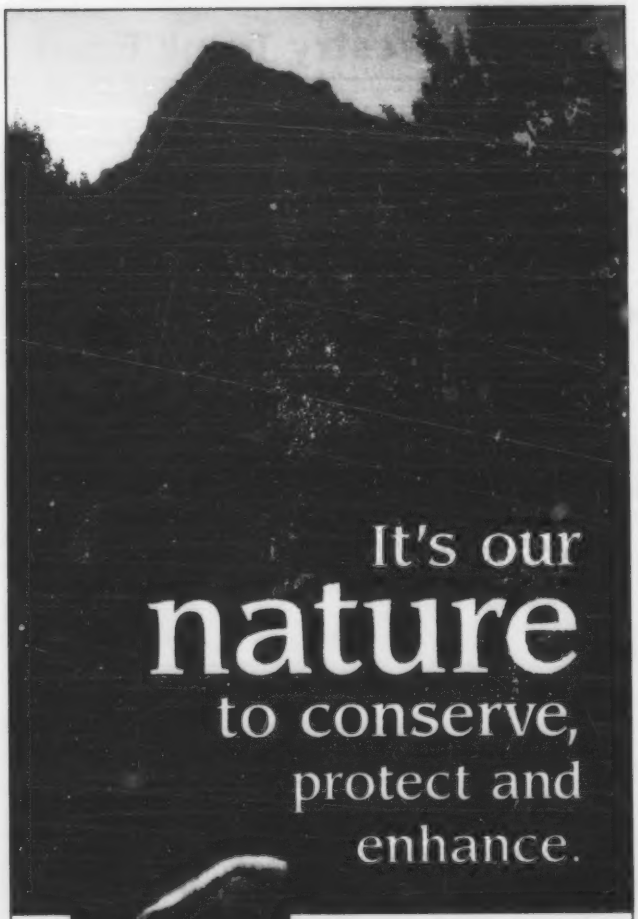
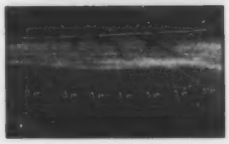


It's our **nature** to conserve, protect and enhance.



Our vision for the future is an Alberta where government, business and citizens work together to conserve and protect this precious resource.

You can help create this lasting legacy.

Together, we can ensure that our fish, wildlife and natural habitat are preserved for future generations of Albertans and visitors to enjoy.

Alberta Conservation Association

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For more information, please contact the ACA at **1-877-969-9091**.

Forestry Trunk Road: An Alberta Travel Adventure

(Highway 40 and Secondary Highway 734)

Winding through forested foothills, the Forestry Trunk Road provides access to some of the most beautiful and rugged country in Alberta. Over 1000 km long, this primarily gravel road runs from Grande Prairie in the north to the Crowsnest Pass in the south. Along the way are sights you won't soon forget. Travelling the Trunk Road you may see deer, moose, bear, red squirrel and other mountain and foothills wildlife. Take time to admire the incredible scenery and sample a variety of outdoor activities.

The views along the Trunk Road will take your breath away, so don't forget your camera! Picture the sheer cliffs and roaring rivers of **Willmore Wilderness Park** from **Hell's Gate (Sulphur Gate) Staging Area**. Take in the panorama of the Bighorn Range from the **Brown Creek** viewpoint, or **Seven Mile Flats** that spread out below Corkscrew Mountain. From the top of **Coliseum Mountain** find secluded Shunda Lake, the Brazeau Range and the North Saskatchewan River Valley.

More than 30 rustic campgrounds, staging areas, viewpoints and picnic sites provide basic needs and serve as base camps for adventurers heading into the backcountry. Hike, ride horseback, or mountain bike along old exploration roads and pack trails. Canoe or raft the North Saskatchewan River, fish for trout in clean mountain streams or savour the solitude of a walk in the woods.

The Trunk Road boasts several outstanding spots. **Athabasca Lookout Nordic Centre** just north of Hinton, offers a world-class cross-country ski trail network with spectacular views of the Rockies. At **Whitehorse Creek**, south of Cadomin, hikers and equestrian users begin the 36 km trail to Miette Hot Springs in Jasper National Park. **Aylmer**, just south of Nordegg, is an ideal launching site for the 2-day canoe trip to Rocky Mountain House on the North Saskatchewan River. At **Ram Falls**, you can contemplate the plunging waters and perhaps catch a glimpse of the local bighorn sheep. And **Livingstone Falls Recreation Area** is a popular spot for hikers and sightseers who come to see the unique "sliding" falls on the Livingstone River.

West of Calgary, **Kananaskis Country** is a 4250 sq km area where you can ski, hike, fish, climb, take a backcountry horseback trip, go kayaking, rafting, or canoeing. Four provincial parks and campgrounds, trails and staging areas provide an abundance of year-round fun. The Trunk Road will take you through spectacular mountain terrain.

The Forestry Trunk Road takes you back to the past. At abandoned coal mines and towns near Nordegg, Cadomin and Robb and in the Crowsnest Pass imagine the prosperity and the hardships. All along the Trunk Road, long deserted fire patrol cabins, ranger stations and fire lookouts make excellent subjects for artists and photographers.

If you seek a route off the beaten track, where you can travel at a leisurely pace, take in the wonders of nature and explore history, the Forestry Trunk Road has what you're looking for.

Ram Falls, named for the bighorn sheep which live in the area; Lesia Boyko

The Corkscrew Mountain section of the Forestry Trunk Road provides excellent views of Seven Mile Flats; Government of Alberta

Canadian Heritage Rivers

Canada is a nation with a rich river heritage. Much more than flowing water, rivers are the threads that bind the fabric of nature and humanity into Canada. Before railways linked the country, rivers were our national transportation network. Now we swim them, fish them, challenge their rapids and wilderness, and seek peace of mind and solitude along their shores.

In Alberta, the portions of the Athabasca and North Saskatchewan rivers within Jasper and Banff national parks respectively, are designated Heritage Rivers. Work is ongoing to increase the numbers and kilometres of Heritage Rivers in Alberta. In 1997, sections of the Clearwater and Christina rivers in northeastern Alberta were nominated and a background study was being conducted for the Peace River.

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Alberta
ENVIRONMENT

Our Partners:

Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation

The Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife Foundation is a non-profit crown corporation that provides a variety of opportunities for planned giving. Funds are being raised in support of amateur sport, recreation, parks, and wildlife habitat in Alberta.

Park and Wildlife Ventures is a land trust program of the Foundation, dedicated to protecting lands with natural heritage values. Trust funds and donations are used to purchase lands or place conservation easements. Endowments have been established to enhance and operate lands and facilities owned by the Foundation.

Albertans who wish to make contributions to protect our natural resources for future generations can do so through land trusts. In addition to parks and other legislated protected areas, natural habitat on private land can be protected. Park and Wildlife Ventures brings together landowners, communities, industry, conservation agencies, and donors to meet conservation goals and the specific needs of communities and landowners.

Would you like:

- general information about donation opportunities to the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks, and Wildlife Foundation?
- information on the donation of land or ecological gifts for conservation purposes?
- information on the use of conservation easements to protect private land?
- the opportunity to participate in the This Living World® Nature Trust for the acquisition and protection of habitat lands?
- information on the Peaceful Valley Provincial Recreation Area and Day Use Lodge?

ALBERTA
SPORT, RECREATION
PARKS & WILDLIFE
FOUNDATION
Endowing Alberta's Communities

For more information about how you can participate, contact Park and Wildlife Ventures at:

905 Standard Life Centre
10405 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4R7

Phone: (780) 422-1097 Fax: (780) 427-5140

SITE LISTING

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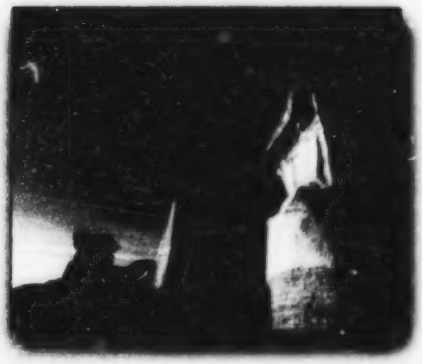

For More Information

For more information about the Parks and Protected Areas Network contact:

Parks and Protected Areas Division
2nd floor Oxbridge Place
9820 - 106 Street
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
T5K 2J6

Phone: (780) 427-7009
Toll-Free: 1-866-427-3582
Fax: (780) 427-5980

Or visit our web site at: http://www.gov.ab.ca/env/parks

For information about facilities, services and recreational opportunities available at provincial parks and recreation areas, refer to the enclosed map, or contact: Parks and Protected Areas Division at (780) 427-7009 (1-866-427-3582) or the Alberta Environment Information Centre at (780) 944-0313.

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